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Coachmart

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November 23, 1989 Issue 564 £1



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NEOPLAN

1982/3/4 Neoplan Skyliners, 71/72/75 seats, toilet, drinks machine, fridge, radio, PA, Mercedes V10 Engine, 6-speed ZF manual gearbox, some remoquetted and refurbished.

VOLVO

1987 Volvo B10M Plaxton Paramount 3500, 49/53 Recliners, O/S rear continental, 1 door, O/S rear sunken toilet, telma retarder, TV/video, drinks machine, red curtains, choice of two.

1982 Volvo B10M Plaxton Viewmaster, 49 seats, o/c continental door, toilet, driver's bunk, drinks machine, power door, tinted windows, livery white, autumn tint moquette, MoT March 1990.

BEDFORD

1981 Bedford YNT 53 seater Plaxton, side lockers, autumn tint moquette, livery white blue/yellow stripes.

LEYLAND

1981 Leyland Leopard Duple Dominant, 53 seats, red moquette, livery white, new MoT.

1981 Leyland Leopard, 11 metre, Plaxton Supreme Express, 53 remoquetted seats, ZF 6-speed, MoT July 1990.

1981 Leyland Leopard, 12 metre Plaxton Supreme IV, 49 Chapman reclining seats, ZF 6-speed manual gearbox, Bristol dome, destination gear. Livery white, autumn tint moquette. MoT.

1980 Leyland Leopard 12 metre Supreme, 53 re-moquetted seats, Bristol dome, 6 sp ZF gearbox, side lockers, MoT 01.09.90.

MAN

1982 SR 280, 46 recliners, Sutrak air conditioning, 6 speed gearbox, o/s centre power door, o/s centre sunken toilet, driver's bunk, fridge, drinks machine, tinted double glazed windows, Rollo blinds, courier seat, Webasto and timer, seat back nets, headrest covers, wheel discs, driver's locker. (For its year, must be the CLEANEST of its type in England).

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1980 Ford R1114 Duple Dominant Express, 53 seats red moq, livery white/blue.
1979 Ford R1114 Duple Dominant Express, 53 seats, Bristol dome, grey/blue moq, livery blue.
1977 Bedford YMT, 53 seater Caetano, livery cream, red moq.
1976 Bedford YMT, 53 seater Plaxton Express, radio, white/red livery, red moq.
1976 Bedford PJK Duple Dominant, 29 seats, autumn tint moq, livery white/green.
1975 Bedford YRQ, 45 seater Plaxton, power door, livery blue/yellow, red moq.
1975 Ford R1114, 53 seater Duple Dominant Express, red moq, livery white/blue/yellow.
1974 Bedford YRT Duple Dominant, 53 seater, power door, red moq, livery white.

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DAF

1989 DAF SB2300 ATI Algarve, 53 reclining seats, continental door, radio PA cassette, curtains, tinted windows, white, orange and black exterior, brown stripe interior, MoT Feb 1990. Choice of 7.

1988 DAF SB3000 DK2 Plaxton Paramount 4000, 74 seats, toilet, servery unit, driver's bunk, finished in white with grey moquette, low mileage, immaculate condition, MoT May 1990.

1988 DAF MB230 Plaxton 3500 2 Star, 49/53 reclining seats, courier seat, rear sunken toilet, driver's bunk, drinks machine, continental door, Webasto, Telma, tinted windows, curtains, finished in white, grey and red moquette, MoT Feb 1990. Choice of 6.

1987 DAF SB2300 Caetano Algarve, sunken centre toilet, driver's bunk, radio PA cassette, 49 reclining seats and courier seat, tinted windows, finished in white with grey and red stripe interior, MoT April 1990. Choice of 2.

1986 DAF SB2300 Berkhof Esprit, 53 reclining seats, courier seat, continental door, tinted windows, curtains, MoT April 1990, finished in white, brown stripe interior.

1983 (Y) DAF SB200 Jonckheere Bermuda, 47/51 reclining seats, ducted heating, integral side lockers, power door, wheel discs, toilet, curtains and seat covers, radio/pa/cassette, interior green stripe, exterior white, MoT February 1990.

1983 (Y) DAF MB Plaxton Paramount 3200, 49 reclining seats, 2 side lockers, ducted heating, power door, rear sunken toilet, tv box and wiring for saloon, radio/pa/cassette, interior brown stripe, exterior white, MoT new.

1980 (V) DAF DKTL Plaxton Supreme IV, 53 fixed seats, 3 heaters, power door, 2 side lockers, wheel discs, radio/pa/cassette, interior red, exterior white, MoT.

FORD

1983 R1114 Duple Dominant, 49 seats + courier seat, curtains, Telma, radio/pa/cassette, blue and white, interior blue. New MoT.

1980 R1114 Plaxton Supreme IV Express, 49 reclining seats, jake brake, side locker, interior brown, exterior cream and maroon. MoT March 1990.

1978 (T) A Series Faro 3, 25 seats, power door, radio cassette, interior red, exterior yellow and red. MoT 23/5/90

SCANIA

1987 (D) Scania K112 CRB Van Hool Alizee H, 49 reclining seats, power door, Telma, crew seat, side lockers, toilet, sink, fridge, blue curtains, radio/pa/cassette, interior blue/red/cream stripe, exterior silver grey, MoT May 1990.

VOLVO



1988 Volvo B10M Plaxton 3500, 53 reclining seats, rear sunken toilet, continental door, courier seat, beige and red interior, exterior white with red and yellow relief. Choice of 3.

1981 (X) Volvo B58 Plaxton Supreme IV, 53 remoquetted seats, power door, Telma, side locker, 3 heaters, wheel discs, interior brown chevron, exterior white, MoT December 1989.

1981 (W) Volvo B58 Unicar 11M, 53 seats, ducted heating, side locker, interior grey, exterior white/orange/red/maroon, MoT April 1990.

N-E-W

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1973 (L) Atlantean 6, 74 seats, interior maroon PVC, exterior white, MoT February 1990.

NEOPLAN

1986 Skyliner Mk II, Gardner engine, ZF automatic gearbox, 77 reclining seats, water boiler, fridge, driver's bunk, TV and video, MoT Feb '90, interior red moquette, ext white, blue and orange.

MINIBUSES



1987 Optare City Pacer, automatic transmission, Eberspacher heating, power door, side locker, 25 seats, int red and grey, ext white, new MoT.

1987 Mercedes-Benz 609D Reeve Burgess coach, 19 seats, power door, radio/pa/cassette, int grey, ext white, orange and black, one only, MoT 02-90.

1983 Y Fiat Caetano Beja, 18 seats, power door, luggage boot, int blue, ext white, MoT 23-04-90.

NEOPLAN

1986 Skyliner MkII Gardner engine, ZF automatic gearbox, 77 reclining seats, water boiler, fridge, drivers bunk, TV and video, MoT Feb '90. Interior red moquette, exterior, white, blue and orange.

AEC

1979 (T) AEC 760 Plaxton Supreme IV, 49 seats, power door, side locker, heater, interior brown/beige stripe, exterior white, MoT March 1990.

BEDFORD

1985 (B) YNT Plaxton Paramount 4000 12m, 53 reclining seats, ZF 6 speed gearbox, auto steering, side lockers, tinted glass, power door, radio/pa/cassette, interior brown and cream, exterior white and yellow, MoT April 1990.

1985 (B) YNT Duple Laser, 53 seats, ZF 6 speed gearbox, heated windscreen, side locker, power door, interior blue/grey stripe, exterior white/orange/yellow stripe, MoT April 1990.

1977 (R) Bedford YMT Plaxton Supreme, 53 seats, 3 heaters, radio/pa/cassette, interior red stripe, exterior white/orange/blue, MoT.

LEYLAND



1985 Leyland Tiger Duple Laser II, fully auto gb, power door, radio/pa/cassette, curtains, int blue stripe, exterior white, MoT 08.06.90, choice of four.

1985 Leyland Tiger Duple Laser II, power door, ducted heating, side locker, radio/pa/cassette, 51 E-type seats, int beige/red, ext white, MoT 08.11.89.

1984 Leyland Tiger 245 Plaxton Paramount 3200 EXP, semi-auto gb, side lockers, toilet, Webasto, 49r, int brown stripe, ext white, MoT 29.01.90.

1984 Leyland Royal Tiger Plaxton Paramount 3500, power door, integral side locker, heating, drinks machine, toilet, tv/video, radio/pa/cassette, 49r seats, int brown stripe, ext white, MoT 13.02.90. Choice of 2.

1984 Leyland Tiger 245F Berkhof Esprit, underfloor lockers, plug power door, ducted heating, toilet, drinks machine, box for tv, radio/pa/cassette, 49r seats, int brown stripe, ext white, MoT 25.06.90.

1983 Leyland Tiger 245 Plaxton Paramount 3500, power door, side lockers, wheel discs, heated mirror, toilet, tv/video, radio/pa/cassette, 49r seats and courier, int brown stripe, ext white, MoT 28.07.90.

1982 Leyland Leopard ECW EXP, semi-auto gb, destination gear, driver's partition, int autumn tint, ext white, 49 seats, MoT 05.05.90.

1982 Leyland Tiger 218 Plaxton Supreme V Ex, 3 heaters, power door, side locker, radio/pa/cassette, 53 seats, int autumn tint, ext white, MoT 30.10.89.

1982 Leyland Leopard Duple Dominant IV, ZF gearbox, power door, SBG dome, 4 heaters, radio/pa/cassette, 53 reclining seats, int blue/grey, ext white/blue, MoT 08.89.

1981 Leyland Leopard Duple Dominant II, ZF gb, power door, Telma, side locker, Bristol dome, 3 heaters, radio/pa/cassette, int red/orange, ext white, 53 seats, MoT 18.01.90, choice of two.

1981 Leyland Leopard Plaxton Sup IV, semi-auto gb, manual route gear, power door, Bristol dome, heated windscreen, 53r seats, int yellow/black, ext white, MoT 01.06.90.

1981 Leyland Leopard Plaxton Supreme IV EXP, semi-auto 2 speed gb, heated windscreen, 48r seats, Bristol dome, driver's cab, int autumn tint, ext cream/orange, MoT 25.11.89. choice of 3.

1979 Leyland Leopard Duple Dominant II, power door, 4 heaters, radio/pa/cassette, 57 seats, int red/orange, ext white/blue, MoT 01.90.

1978 Leyland Leopard Duple Dominant I, power door, Telma, Bristol dome, Webasto heaters, side locker, 49 seats, int blue stripe, ext white, MoT 12.01.90.

1972 Leyland Leopard Plaxton Supreme IV EXP, power door, autolube, side locker, 2 heaters, int autumn tint, ext red/cream, MoT 01.90.

SCANIA

PLAXTON



Alexander

Coachmart

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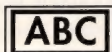
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MEMBER OF THE AUDIT
BUREAU OF CIRCULATIONS

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Rod Davey concludes his series on the tourist delights of Brittany with a look at the magnificently enchanting castles of the Loire Valley.



Conference report.....page 24

HOW do you assess your profitability at the end of each financial year?

Do you earn your profit from operating your coaches and buses or are you happy to break even or make a loss on running the coaches in the belief that you will make a year-end profit by selling your surplus coaches?

This is certainly a regular practice in the industry and one on which many operators have come to rely.

But it could prove to be a ruinous route in the current state of the new and secondhand vehicle market.

As last week's closure of Arlington's coach and bus dealership revealed, there are already too many unsold new and used coaches on the market.

A year ago, when interest rates were low, dealers and manufacturers could afford to be optimistic. They ordered substantial numbers of new coaches and many dealers were prepared to be generous in the part exchange deals they were prepared to make in taking in older vehicles.

Since then, interest rates have rocketed, operators have been more cautious in their vehicle buying and stocks of new and used coaches have built up around the country.

Arlington's closure has added 162 new and over 100 secondhand coaches and buses to Kirkby's stock. It is no secret that this is but a proportion of the stocks of unsold vehicles around the country on which dealers are having to pay interest and maintenance costs.

In the short term, this may be good news for operators looking for a quick bargain. We hear of some agreements being made

which tie dealers to buying back new coaches at times of the operator's choosing and of some generous warranty provisions being offered.

But that situation cannot last. Dealers must earn profits from selling coaches in their yards and, whatever deals may be struck now, prices must rise before long, even if that does mean manufacturers sacrificing some of their sales volume.

And, more significantly, dealers can be expected to be much more choosy in 1990 than they were this year in taking coaches in part exchange deals.

They may have been happy to take in a borderline coach at a high price if it helped move more expensive new and nearly new coaches out of the yard, but as long as there are too many better vehicles in their stocks, there will be little incentive for dealers to take in coaches which look like being bad sellers.

If your business's profits depend on getting good prices for older coaches, then you ought to be reviewing your business strategy to see whether your fleet is too large or if you are selling your coaches too soon. Ask yourself which is more important, having the newest coaches in the fleet or having a strong profit performance?

Some of the most successful independent coach operators keep their coaches for 10 or 15 years, some will only accept work which they know is profitable.

They know that they cannot depend on earning profit from selling their capital assets. For, in the end, the only measure of a successful coach business is the strength of its bottom line profit.

CONTINENTAL PACKAGE HOLIDAYS

Coach Operator with 8 years' experience of Shuttle/Tour Holidays is now based in Northern Spain/Costa Blanca and can arrange a complete package i.e. ferries, hotel, excursions and resident rep. We have an excellent relationship with hotel owners and agents in Lloret De Mar, Rosas, Malgrat, Calella.

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**LET US ARRANGE A HOLIDAY FOR YOUR
CUSTOMERS, THAT WE KNOW THEY WILL
ENJOY WITH YOU.**

Blockade beaters raise £6,000

A RMCHAIR Coaches beat the ferry blockade during a Beaujolais run and helped fundraisers put more than £6,000 towards Cancer Research.

Charitable Armchair were among sponsors for the Richmond Friends of the Imperial Cancer Research Fund trip from Dover to Calais planned for the weekend. Everything looked on target until seamen mounted another port blockade.

Co-sponsors P & O Ferries advised organisers to call the trip off, but undaunted they chose a ferry crossing to Boulogne to beat the strike action... and reached Calais in time to sample the new wine with their paying passengers. Then the problems really started.

With the blockade taking full effect, the coach was turned back at Calais, went to Boulogne, and was

turned back again to Calais. Long-suffering driver Ray Lambert couldn't believe his bad luck when, on arrival, he was once again turned back to Boulogne!

"We can't thank everyone enough," said the trip's publicist Mrs Pat Bamber. "Armchair provided the coach free of charge, and P & O supplied the ferry crossing. Ray Lambert supplied endless patience."

Cash was raised by a host of other sponsors, by "renting" window advertising space on the coach and by the donation of advertising space in a local paper.

"We have already collected £4,500," said Mrs Pat Bamber, one of the organisers. "Some of the money will be going towards the Kenton Children's Ward at Bart's Hospital."

Sight for sore eyes



FOUR brand-new Leyland Olympians are being used by London Pride Sightseeing, replacing much older vehicles.

London Pride, a subsidiary of Ensign Bus, has opted for Northern Counties bodywork on the 10-metre vehicle, to give 49 upper-deck seats - substantially more than in the older buses and no doubt helping to make the purchase of new vehicles more viable.

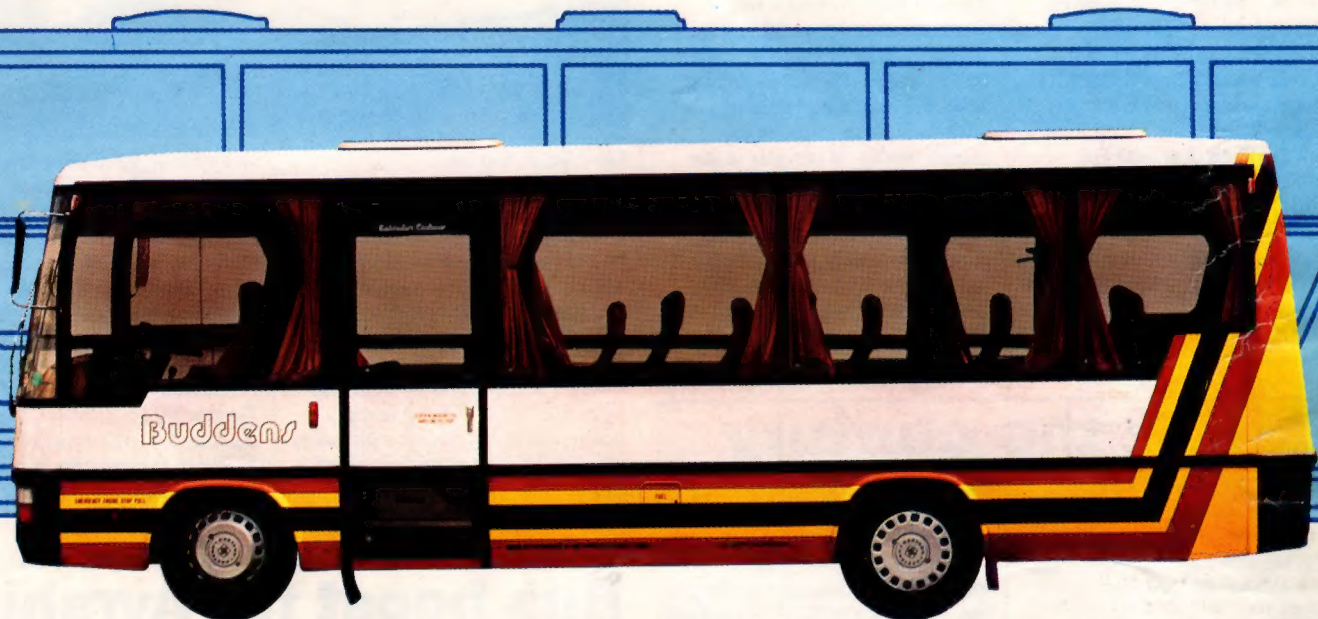
The Olympians are the first new sightseeing double-decks for some time, most companies - including London Pride - running Routemasters and an assortment of other secondhand vehicles acquired from LRT in particular.

The buses are confirmation of Ensign's departure from Gardner-engined new vehicles to Cummins which began with an Alexander-bodied Olympian with L10 engine purchased around two months ago for Ensignbus.

The buses, as can be seen, sport a new livery of red and silver and the boldest of statements along the upper deck panelling. Among innovations is a six-language tape deck system which, via hygienic headphones, relays the history of old London in the visitor's native tongue. The system uses standard cassettes with eight tracks to achieve this, making the old reel-to-reel decks redundant.

The Caetano Optimo seats no more than 21 passengers, but it is every bit as comfortable as a full sized coach.

So many vehicles of this kind are just expensively converted vans or trucks – but the Optimo's Toyota Coaster chassis was especially designed to carry people. This and independent front suspension combine to ensure an outstandingly smooth ride.



Additional luxuries include easy access (through a power operated door) and an excellent ventilation system.

BEING HALF THE SIZE DOESN'T MAKE IT ANY LESS OF A COACH

The Optimo speeds along on a powerful 4 litre, 6 cylinder Toyota turbo diesel engine with a 5-speed gear-box, until front discs and an exhaust brake bring it effortlessly to a halt.

So if you put your customers' comfort first, find out more information from:

Steve Prime, Coach Sales Manager,
Toyota (GB) Ltd, The Quadrangle, Redhill,
Surrey RH1 1PX. Tel: 0737 768585.

TOYOTA

CAETANO OPTIMO

Tyne and Wear soldtwice!

Trimdon Motor Services' subsidiary, Tyne and Wear Omnibus Company, has been swept off the streets of Newcastle following a takeover by Busways Travel Services in a swift deal last Friday, November 17.

All 187 employees were given 90-day redundancy notices by Busways the following morning.

Bob Lewis and Les McSheffrey, Trimdon chairman and company secretary, had originally negotiated a £2-2.5 million deal with Go-Ahead Northern subsidiary Coolfirm for the sale of TWOC assets and goodwill. Within two hours Coolfirm had been sold by Northern to the privatised Busways Travel Services Ltd.

TWOC ran up to 98 ex-NBC Bristol LH/ECW saloons on routes in Newcastle, Sunderland and

South Shields. Its mix of commercial and tendered operation competed directly with Busways.

Eric Hutchinson, Busways MD, announced that TWOC's Saltmeadows Road depot acquired in the deal will be closed "in due course". Both Busways and Northern regard the takeover as "commercially convenient". Martin Ballinger, Go-Ahead Northern's MD, told Coachmart that his intention was to improve the overall quality of services in the north east. The TWOC vehicles were "of poor quality and not fitting in with the image of the area". "I was very pleased to have the opportunity to acquire TWOC", said Ballinger, who explained the subsequent re-sale to Busways as being for "commercial reasons...a lot more benefit to Busways than to



Go-Ahead Northern."

According to local sources there is every possibility of a legal battle, with TMS management reported to be "devastated" and seeking legal advice. There is also concern over the implications for service subsidies. Councillor John Shipley, Democrat leader of Newcastle City Council and member of Tyne and Wear PTA said, "I have severe doubts about whether this take-over is in the interests of the travelling public. TWOC did provide a competitive edge, but I am now concerned that the standard of

service may go down while the cost rises."

TMS will continue to operate a fleet of 36 from its Trimdon base on routes facing direct competition from Favourite, a Busways subsidiary established in retaliation to TWOC in 1986. The future of Favourite may now be in question.

Another TMS subsidiary is Teeside Motor Services, which operates 70 LH's from a base in Stockton in competition with Cleveland Transit. The smaller Jersey Motor Transport company is also owned.

Sale of the century

COACHMART readers were intrigued a fortnight ago when an advertiser put his coach business up for sale at the knock-down price of just £150,000.

The business - un-named in the advert - is Stothards of Pickering, based in the picturesque village of Lockton. Started 40 years ago, it was bought and run for the last eight years by husband and wife team Bob and Sandy Paine.

Business has been better, admitted Sandy, but other interests had taken so much of

their time, the last year has seen less and less work for its two ageing Bedford coaches, two minibuses and two leased motorhomes. The sale includes the vehicles and 120-foot garage, with the option of buying the attached stone cottage.

* On the subject of head-scratching, our story in the same issue about Mel McGrath leaving Hughes DAF may have confused some readers. The un-captioned picture was of new Hughes DAF managing director Bob McLeod, not the outgoing McGrath. Our apologies to all.

Bus boost for Ayrshire

AYRSHIRE is to get a new bus operation in January when Shuttlebuses of Kilwinning send a small fleet of minibuses down the road.

Started by former Western Scottish employees David Granger - a university graduate and marketing man - and former inspector Harry Hay, the new firm

expects to tender for local routes and school work, beginning with just three leased vehicles. Shuttlebuses already has an operator's licence.

"We've been talking about this for 18 months," said Hay. "David and I get along like a house on fire, so we think we'll be able to make a go of things."

Showrooms and Conversion Workshop at:
Crystals Industrial Park, Barnby Dun Road,
Doncaster. Tel. (0302) 328888 - Frank Bloom
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Showroom at 127 Dartford Road, Dartford, Kent
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NEW VEHICLES, CRYSTALS OWN CONVERSIONS

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TALBOT EXPRESS 1500, diesel, high roof, 14 high back moquette seats, radio/cassette, 4 speakers, full soft trim, luggage racks, saloon heater, quad vent, tinted windows. **£14,500.**

FREIGHT ROVER, diesel, 5-speed, 16 high back moquette seats, high roof, radio/cassette, 4 speakers, full soft trim, luggage racks, saloon heater, quad vent, tinted windows. **£15,950.**

LEYLAND DAF 400 SERIES, diesel, 5 speed, 16 high back moquette seats, high roof, radio/cassette, 4 speakers, 4 soft trim luggage racks, saloon heater, quad vent, tinted windows. **£16,700.**

EX DEMO FREIGHT/ROVER Unreg. very high spec., 12 seater. **£9,950. Ring for full spec**

1986 (C) 307D 12 MOQ SEATS, high spec throughout, annual March 1990. **£10,250.**

1982 (Y) TRANSIT 16 SEATER, 1 year's annual. **£5,350.**

1982 (X) TRANSIT PETROL, 12 seater, all tidy. **£3,250.**

1984 (A) FIAT PETROL, 12 seater, annual June 1989, very clean vehicle. **£3,950.**

1980 (V) 16 SEATER TRANSIT, petrol, annual February 90. **£3,500.**

1976 (P) TRANSIT PETROL, welfare dormobile. **£950.**

1977 TRANSIT DORMOBILE DIESEL, 16 seats, annual December 1989. **£1,450**

D REG CAETANO VIANNA

22 seats, high back moquette, power door, vgc, 1 year's annual.

1984 (B) TRANSIT DIESEL, overdrive, 16 high back moquette seats, high spec, annual Feb. **£8,250.**

1986 (D) FREIGHT ROVER + 5 STANDEES, power door, service bus.

1983 (Y) MERCEDES 508D, 19 high back moquette seats, Bristol dome, boot, annual Dec '89. **£10,950.**

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1983 (Y) TRANSIT, 16 seater, petrol, full soft trim, luggage racks, annual April '90. **£4,950.**

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1985 (B) TRANSIT DIESEL, 12 moquette seats, 1 year's annual, very tidy throughout **£6,250.**

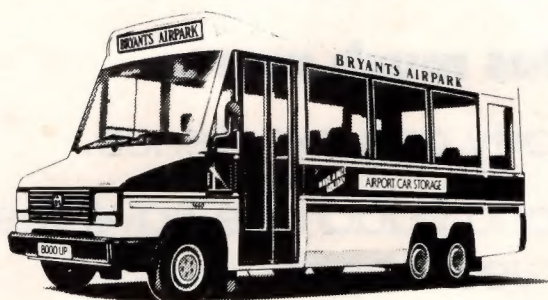
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School buses in government seat belt plan

THE Government seems to be targeting school buses for its first initiative to get seat belts fitted in coaches.

Robert Atkins, Minister for Roads and Traffic, announced a consultation document last week which will, if approved, lead to the Government pressing the European Community for new legislation for school buses.

"We already require seat belts on the front seats of new coaches and minibuses. Our aim is to get this provision extended to all the seats in coaches and minibuses," said Atkins. "Meanwhile, we are encouraging local education authorities to specify that, wherever possible, vehicles used to transport children are fitted with seat belts

and to see that they are worn."

The statement has caused a storm of protest from operators, coachbuilders and the Bus and Coach Council...which says it was not consulted and has grave doubts about the viability and safety of all seat-belted vehicles.

Coachbuilders have admitted the fitment of seat belts from new will be a headache, and retro-fitting them a nightmare. While the belts can be joined to the seat, the extra strain on its mountings during an impact could see the seat itself coming adrift. Anchoring seat belts to the coach would be difficult and, with many operators wanting the option of changing seat layout, may be impossible to do well.

One minibus builder said the

answer may lie in lap restraints, with additional padding and smoother surfaces on the backs of seats to absorb any impact. Accidents had seen children flying forward into ashtrays, grab rails and fold-down tables.

The BCC has condemned the plan almost universally, and says the fitment of seat belts is further complicated by the "three for two" rule which allows small children to pack three to a seat.

"Since we haven't been approached or consulted, we do not know the detail of Mr Atkins's plans," said BCC director of public affairs Barry Hoyer. "If we assume these rules are only to apply to class 5 and 6 non-PSV community buses, we'd be delighted at any attempt to bring up the standard."

"If Mr Atkins is proposing seat belts for all school buses, we can see some benefit. The "three for two" rule could not be used on seat-belted vehicles, so there would theoretically be requirement for 50 per cent more vehicles.

Overcrowding does cause operators some problems, and this would go a

long way to reducing the incidence of vandalism and hooliganism."

"Our concern from a technical viewpoint is that the fitting of seat belts will not reduce injury and may actually cause it. Coach and bus seats are designed to collapse under impact anyway, and seat belts might increase head and internal injuries. They certainly won't reduce fatalities, since there were only three PSV deaths when passengers were in their seats in 1987 - the latest available figures - and none in 1986."

If the plan results in seat belt introduction, many operators will pull out of school contract work altogether, as many already have, due to the cut-throat nature of the tendering systems. Seat belts would add a burden of cost and may, inadvertently, leave operators having to equip vehicles with them in order to be able to tender for a contract...a gamble which few will be prepared to take.

"School bus work is the bread and margarine of an operator's day - it certainly doesn't pay for butter," said Hoyer.

Improve your Image

THIS is your final opportunity to join the many satisfied delegates who have already attended Coachmart's 1989 conferences.

Many delegates have already spoken highly of the quality of the presentations and discussion at last week's Finance for Profit conferences in London and York and have reserved their places at the Image to Increase Sales conferences.

There are still a few places left for the London Image Conference next Monday, November 27 at the Kensington Palace Hotel. To reserve your

place, ring Jean Jarvis TODAY on 0733 63100. Remember, it only costs £29.95 including lunch.

We have a full programme of speakers from the industry and outside - including Wallace Arnold MD John King, livery designer Ray Stenning and Lada Cars MD Martin Austin - who promise to bring many challenging ideas on better ways to increase the earning power of your coach business.

It will be a day well spent.

■ Report on last week's finance conferences is on page 24.

Scots route war rages



A Cityline 500 Glasgow-Edinburgh service Setra awaits passengers.

THE Glasgow-Edinburgh route war shows no sign of abating, as the half-hourly service offered jointly by Silver Coach Lines and Greens continues to run, and local radio stations extol its virtues.

A spokesman at Silver Coach Lines says the Cityline 500 luxury coaches are getting a good response and passengers who travelled last week using their Scottish Citylink 10-journey passes are now buying

Cityline's: "We are getting good loads at peak times," he said.

Meanwhile, Caledonian Express Stagecoach continues to use the Citylink-owned Buchanan Bus Station in Glasgow, but its coaches have been relegated to remote stands at the end of the station, and booking is now away from the main booking and enquiry office, and is located in the Stagecoach Portacabin outside.

DUE TO RETIREMENT THE FOLLOWING VEHICLES ARE TO BE DISPOSED OF

LEYLAND LEOPARD

Semi automatic, 12 metre, Plaxton body, engine recently rebuilt, retrimmed, power door, 57 seats, reg June '79, MoT October '90. NICE MOTOR, INSPECTION A MUST.

LEYLAND LEOPARD

Semi automatic 680, Duple Dominant, 11 metre, 49 semi-reclining seats, tinted windows, Telma, reg Sept '80. MoT, April '90.

LEYLAND ROYAL TIGER DOYANNE EXECUTIVE COACH TLII

47 reclining seats, centre toilet and servery, fridge, crew cabin, double glazed, side lockers, radio cassette, PA system, Eberspacher, Telma, reg June '85, MoT June '90. INSPECTION RECOMMENDED.

LEYLAND TIGER PLAXTON 3500

Semi automatic executive coach, 48 reclining seats, rear toilet and servery, fridge, crew cabin, side lockers, Webasto, radio cassette, PA system, video, curtains, reg Jan '84, MoT November '90.

DAF 2800 JONCKHEERE JUBILEE P50 EXECUTIVE COACH

49 reclining seats, rear toilet and servery, Telma, double glazed, video, side lockers, ferry lift, radio cassette, PA system. LOVELY MOTOR. Reg Nov '83, MoT Nov '90.

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Retired driver in NBC pension storm

An ex-Ribble and BET driver is at the centre of a storm caused by the winding-up of ex-National Bus Company Pension schemes - involving a once-and-for-all payment to the Treasury of a £100 million surplus.

Retired driver Francis Wheeler is one of the schemes' 16,500 pensioners and is angry the pension fund trustees changed the trust deeds to transfer the money to the State, according to a report in *The Sunday Correspondent*.

Coachmart found case law, made by Mr Justice Millet in *Hanson vs The Committee of Management of the Courage Pension Fund*, may give a legal basis of complaint. He adjudged members of occupational pension schemes are entitled to consultation and negotiation - despite having no legal right to the actual surpluses.

While the charitable Occupational Pensions Advisory Service (OPAS) feel that the case may "warrant further investigation", a spokesman for the Transport & General Workers Union told Coachmart: "Although

the action might have been exceedingly unfair it was definitely not illegal."

But the ex-MD of the now defunct NBC Pension Fund Trustees Ltd, Tony Walker, explicitly denied charges of mismanagement of the fund when approached by Coachmart.

According to Walker, prior to the 1985 Transport Act, which required the privatisation of the NBC, the trustees started action to wind up the fund in the nationalised bus sector - and at the time there were "deficiencies in both funds". He said: "What turned out after three further years to be a £100 million surplus may well have been a £200 million deficit" - with the Treasury and the taxpayer picking up the tab.

Prior to the dismantling of the fund the trustees had lobbied the Government and eventually settled on a deal which, in their view, safeguarded the interests of the fund's members - and then asked for tenders from the insurance sector to take over the fund's assets and management. Seventeen tenders were received with

Standard Life, a mutual company, taking over the fund in May earlier this year.

In contrast to the Government offering to guarantee benefits, uprating with inflation plus 1.5 per cent in October 1985, which the trustees rejected, Standard life agreed to a package which not only

index-linked upward but uprated by an additional 2.5 per cent per annum. With the duration of pension schemes spread over a typical thirty-odd year life, such a difference of one per cent, when compounded over time, made £100 million small beer by comparison, according to Walker.

BCC to fight VAT plan

THE Bus and Coach Council is opposing the introduction of VAT in public transport... though the EEC seems set to press for its introduction before 1992.

A newspaper article had speculated that the United Kingdom will be made to come into line with other countries. Bus and coach tickets are taxed directly on the continent, but government subsidies in France and Germany cover a proportion of the tax.

"We won't be playing on a flat pitch," said BCC spokesman Liam Fitzpatrick. "Some time ago, the EEC had agreed in

principle to zero-rate some products, and they included public transport. I have no reason to suppose that position has changed."

"In any case, the BCC's stance remains the same. The public transport system is very price sensitive and we would be against any tax on it."

New address

THE British Road Federation has changed address and is now at Pillar House, 194 - 202 Old Kent Road, London SE1 5TG. The telephone number is 01 703 9769, Fax 01 701 0029.



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DAF SB 2305 DHS, ALGARVE 3.35, low driver, 51/53 recliners, centre Continental door, courier seat, Blaupunkt radio equipment, tinted windows, curtains, centre gangway carpet.

DAF MB 230 LB, ALGARVE 3.35 EXECUTIVE, 49/53 recliners, courier seat, double-glazed, centre sunken demountable toilet, centre door, curtains, Blaupunkt radio equipment, centre carpet.

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USED SELECTION



1986 DAF, BOVA FUTURA FHD, 49 recliners, courier seat, double-glazed, centre-sunken toilet, Continental door, berth, boiler, boxed/wired for video.

1983 (Y) LEYLAND TIGER 218 ZF, PLAXTON PARAMOUNT 3200, 57 seats, power door, tinted windows.

1983 (Y) LEYLAND TIGER 245 ZF, PLAXTON PARAMOUNT 3500, 49 recliners, courier seat, double-glazed, rear sunken toilet, Continental door, wired for video.

BEDFORD

1987 (D) YNV, CAETANO ALGARVE, 57 seats, power door, side lockers.

1985 (C) YNV, CAETANO ALGARVE, 53 recliners, tinted windows, Continental door, curtains, radio.

1979 (V) YMT, DUPLÉ DOMINANT II EXPRESS, 53 seats, Bristol Dome, tinted windows.

1978 (S) PUK, DUPLÉ DOMINANT, 29 seats.

MINIBUS SELECTION



1985 (B) IVECO 60.10 CAETANO BEVA, 18 seats, power door, curtains, parcel racks.

1987 (E) IVECO 79.14 CAETANO VIANA, 19 seats, curtains, manual door.

1986 (C) IVECO 79.14 CAETANO VIANA, GL, 19 seats, power door, tinted windows, forced air, reading lights, soft trim.

1981 (X) MERCEDES 508D REEVE BURGESS, 21 seats, Bristol dome, boot, tinted windows.

1980 (W) MERCEDES 608D REEVE BURGESS, 18 seats, parcel radio, soft trim.

1980 (V) MERCEDES 508D REEVE BURGESS, 18 seats, boot, parcel racks.

1975 (N) BEDFORD CAETANO FARO II, 20 seats.

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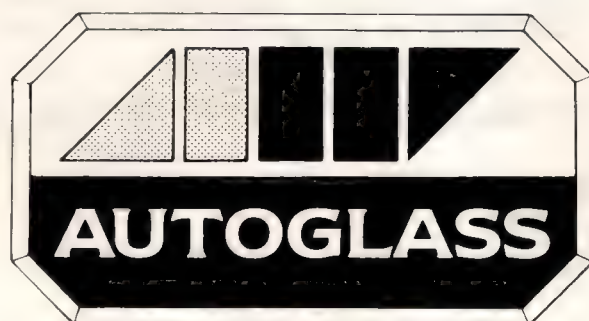
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FLEET UPDATE

Big order for Volvo buses

Drawlane group member London & Country is placing 25 Volvo D10M buses in service.

The batch have 80 seat Northern Counties bodywork completed to a specification meeting LRT requirements. They are the first Northern Counties bodied double deckers purchased by Drawlane, and follow earlier purchases of minibuses for the Reigate-based member of the group.



Leased Expressliner on Dover service



National Expressliners are gradually becoming more common. Although retaining a degree of anonymity this coach can be identified as being operated by East Kent on services to Dover.

Like all Expressliners it is on lease from National Expressliners Ltd and is to standard specification with Volvo B10M GLE chassis

Forward-financed Falcons



Forward Trust Group have funded the purchase of these seven Dennis Falcon HC single deckers for Ipswich Buses Ltd. Financed through a seven year leasing arrangement the vehicles complete a £500,000 vehicle replacement programme.

The East Lancs bodied buses are fully equipped with 44 seats, dual door entrance/exit as well as Webasto heating. Gardner 6HLXB engines and Voith D851 series transmissions complete the chassis specification.

First twin arrives

Pictured is this Reeve Burgess bodied Mercedes Benz for W B Kerr & Co Ltd, Wallsend, Tyne & Wear.

The Beaver coach is one of two for the north east operator with 33 seats and a specification which includes: adjustable seat track, moquette roof panel, deep rear boot and power door. Kirkby Coach and Bus supplied the vehicle on 814D chassis featuring 3.97 litre turbocharged intercooled engine and manual transmission.



Bova double for Priory

This Bova is the second to be delivered to Priory of Gosport, Hampshire. David Cowdrey of Priory's took delivery of the coach from Allan Vaultner of the Moseley Group.



Time to play safe

WHEN we think of safety we tend to apply our minds to coach and bus maintenance rather more than to safety in the workplace. All businesses should, by now, be displaying the Health & Safety Executive notice. The fact that its display became a legal requirement from 18th October was much publicised in the national press, but I suspect some operators have not yet complied. These notices are available from HMSO outlets at £3.20 plus VAT. Less publicised are the new COSHH regulations (Control of Substances Hazardous to Health). They came into force on 1st October and, I suspect, are of concern to us.

It is tempting to bury one's head in the sand and assume that now that we mainly use asbestos free brake linings, there are no hazardous substances on our premises and that, consequently, the COSHH Regulations need not bother us. This is not so. Seemingly innocuous substances like photocopier toner and typing correcting fluid can be hazardous to health as can some adhesives. Slightly more obviously, all form of bodily exposure to fuel and lubricants can cause dermatitis and other nasty consequences. I understand that these Regulations lay down the acceptable exposure limits to a range of health

hazardous substances which may be found in the working environment.

Many years ago The Bus & Coach Council published a blue loose leaf book (I still have my copy) on the general topic of Health & Safety at Work in the PSV industry. Last time I enquired I was informed that it was currently being updated. I hope that it will embrace the COSHH Regulations as I do not suppose that many operators will actually purchase the full blown regulation and attempt to discover its detailed applicability.

The risk of accident, like burglary, is something we all tend to think will affect others but 'will never happen to me'. As often as not this is true. I inspected my accident book (also a legal requirement in any workplace) and found only six recorded incidents in 12 years. None of them were in the slightest bit serious. But, sometimes something happens which brings home the nearness of the risk of accidents.

In my case it was a chance conversation at Coach & Bus '89 from which I understand that John Woodward (Woodward's Coaches, Glossop) fell from a dodgy ladder while working in his garage and has been in a wheelchair for some months. I take this opportunity of sending him all good wishes for a

full recovery from his many friends in the industry.

I am sure that John Woodward will be pleased to know that I have gained something from his misfortune. I went home from Birmingham and took a good look at the steps and ladders in my workshop. Yes, there were ladders with cracked or even missing rungs and also a pair of wooden steps on which one side leg was badly split. I consigned the lot to the skip and replaced them with new equipment. Perhaps we



should all have a safety audit from time to time - and at least once a year - of all the equipment on our premises. Accidents are painful and expensive and therefore best avoided.

New opening for mini-bus drivers

I anticipate that by the time you are reading this, the ambulance drivers' dispute will be settled, if only because they have managed to win quite a lot of public support. Although I hate and despise all strikers I was taken in by their claim that £10,000 a year was not reasonable pay for a skilled paramedical person.

But that is something of a distortion of the truth, for only one tenth of their time is spent on emergency calls, the other nine tenths they are no more

than caring mini-bus drivers ferrying people to clinics and out-patients units. Few, if any, mini-bus drivers in our industry are on hourly pay rates which bear comparison with ambulance drivers.

As the majority of the non-emergency ambulance provision falls outside bus peak hours I wonder whether there is not scope for PSV operators to be contracted for some of this work. Now, there's a marketing opportunity for mini-bus operators to pursue!

Margins or mileage—it's a crucial choice

IS it the fact that we run public service vehicles that give so many of us social conscience hang-ups about maintaining the level of mileage we operate rather than maintaining profitability? Why are we always striving to hold at, or increase, the size of our fleets; yet watching our bank balances dwindle? Do not many of us get carried away with the level of turnover and the problems of cash-flow, but neglect critical examination of return on capital and sales to profit ratios?

Few other industries suffer from these stupid foibles. Look how estate agents upped commission rates in order to maintain the same level of profitability from a lower sales

turn over, and closed outlets as soon as the level of the market dictated that there was overprovision. Now our sister industry - the travel trade - is also adopting this approach.

At the ABTA conference in Acapulco a bullish Harry Goodman, chairman of International Leisure Group announced his SECOND 300,000 cut back in holiday places for 1990 season. This represented a 25% cut in his company's programme and formed part of a two million place reduction across ABTA membership. The managing director of the Thompson Travel Group summed it up: "Sales may be down next year, but the profit margins are up

- and that is the most important thing."

Quite right too! Although I have recently bemoaned the fact that high interest rates may limit fleet update programmes I am coming round to the view that even this storm cloud may have a silver lining. If, instead of continuing to run ageing vehicles, many of us simply disposed of those we could not afford to replace, and discarded a commensurate amount of the least profitable work; we too would be reducing the seats available to the public and increasing profits. All of us are guilty of keeping a contract that is not really covering the true cost of a peak hour vehicle, of running a service

which is no longer profitable but which we are reluctant to throw to the tender market because it has been 'our route' for years, or perhaps we are constantly running half full excursions but persist in this market just because the drivers like doing them.

Perhaps, instead of wondering what new or extra work we can do to maintain or increase turnover we would be better employed in examining what parts of our business we could drop and thereby increase profits. ABTA is not one of my favourite organisations, but I strongly suspect that if we followed their lead and reduced our capacity by 25%, our profits too would look much better.

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1982 LEYLAND LEOPARD 680, Semi-Auto Plaxton, 50 seats. £16,000
1981 LEYLAND LEOPARD 680 Semi-Auto Duple Dominant II, 53 seats. £14,000
1981 LEYLAND LEOPARD 680 Semi-Auto Duple Dominant II, 50 reclining seats. £14,000
1979 LEYLAND LEOPARD 680 Semi-Auto Duple Dominant II, 50 reclining seats, MoT 23.6.90. £12,000
1979 LEYLAND LEOPARD 680 Semi-Auto Duple Dominant II, 50 reclining seats. MoT 5.6.90. £12,000

BEDFORD

1979 BEDFORD YMT Duple Dominant, 53 seats, new MoT. £9,000
1979 BEDFORD YLQ Duple Dominant, 45 seats. £8,000
1974 BEDFORD PJK Duple Dominant, 29 seats. £3,500



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1974 BRISTOL LH401 Plaxton, 43 seats. £4,000

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1982 LEYLAND TIGER TL11 Duple Dominant, 50 reclining seats. £17,000

MINI BUSES

1986 SHERPA, Carlyle service body, 20 seats, choice of 6. £8,600

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1971-74 BRISTOL VRT2. ECW bodies, Gardner engines, current test certificates.
1974-80 BRISTOL VRT3. ECW bodies, Gardner engines, current test certificates.
1975-77 BRISTOL VRT3. Northern Counties, 2 door, no test certificates.
1972-75 LEYLAND ATLANTIAN AN68. East Lancs and Park Royal bodies, current test certificates.

SINGLE DECK BUSES

1974-77 LEYLAND NATIONALS. 10.3m bus or coach, 4/90 - 6/90 test certificates.
1975 LEYLAND NATIONALS. 10.3m, 2 door with 6/90 test certificates.

USED COACHES

LEYLAND LEOPARD Duple, 53 seats, power door.
1980 DAF DKTL Plaxton Supreme, 53 seats, new certificate.
1982 'X' reg BEDFORD YNT Plaxton Supreme V, 53 seats, 4/90 Test Certificate.
1981 'W' reg BEDFORD YNT Duple, 46 reclining seats and spare set of 49 fixed seats, current test certificate.
1982 LEYLAND TIGER Duple Goldliner, 46 seats, d/glazing, toilet on saloon floor, current test certificate. Choice of two.
DAF MB. 'C' reg 85/86, Berkhof, 49-53 seats, sunken toilet at rear, automatic gearbox.

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ROAD TEST



PRIDE OF THE POTTERIES

The five towns of the Potteries are easily by-passed by travellers on the M6, but the traditional products of the area have found their way into every home and workshop.

Ceramic products have shown a resilience to changes in demand that many other manufacturers would envy. A drive through the area is not only a reminder of many bathroom names, but brings home the density of urban development served by PMT and other local bus operators.

Certain town names are not found on the destination blinds of PMT buses, but as product names of the local bus manufacturer. Arnold Bennett portrayed the local character in his novels, and PMT Engineering confirmed its local pedigree by using Bennett-inspired identities for its bus range.

Knype, Bursley and Hanbridge established the tradition with both Knype and Bursley having been tested previously by Coachmart

PMT Engineering introduced its AMI minibus at the BCC Show. Mike Morgan road tests the stylish newcomer, which is based on the Mercedes Benz 811



(November 25 1988 and January 15, 1988). In response to operating experience and market requirements, PMT Engineering have stretched the original Bursley concept to fit the extended Mercedes 811 chassis, given it a new frontal design, and christened the body 'AMI'.

The inspiration of Bennett's classic stories was considered less appropriate for a product destined to compete in a world of marketing and hard sell. AMI having more appeal than Oldcastle, Bleakridge or Cauldon!

The small bus atmosphere of the Bursley drew together the threads separately developed by the history of PMT as a bus operator and the mini-bus revolution. The Knype was married to Leyland Swift chassis - producing an uneasy design after an earlier relationship with a Mercedes chassis. I was very interested to find out if PMT Engineering had developed a more compelling and subtle design with the AMI.

ROAD TEST

Data File

Chassis Mercedes Benz 811D
Body PMT AMI 28 seat service bus

Dimensions

Length 8000 mm
Width 2286 mm
Height 3000 mm
Wheelbase 4800 mm
Unladen Weight 4440 kg
Door width 70 cm
Step height 23 cm
Emergency exit width 63 cm

Mechanical Specification

Engine Mercedes Benz OM364A 4 cylinder turbo charged diesel
Power 114 bhp (85 KW) @ 2600 rpm
Torque 280 Lbf ft (380 Nm) @ 1500 rpm

Gearbox Mercedes Benz G2/27-5/6.17 Five speed synchromesh
Exhaust brake foot operated through foot brake
Steering Mercedes Benz recirculating ball integral power steering. Type LS3D. Ratio 19.3:1

Brakes

Service Dual circuit hydraulic with vacuum booster and load sensing valve
Front Floating caliper ventilated disc
Rear Drum brakes
Parking Ratchet operated mechanical brake operating on rear wheels

Clutch Single dry plate hydraulically actuated

Suspension

Front Parabolic leaf springs. Telescopic shock absorbers with heavy duty stabilizer
Rear Supporting leaf springs with auxiliary springs. Telescopic shock absorbers with heavy duty stabilizer

Axles

Front Mercedes-Benz rigid stub axle type VL1/10C-2.5
Rear Mercedes-Benz hypoid type HL2/15-5.8
Ratio 3.64:1 (optional 3.9:1)

Electrics

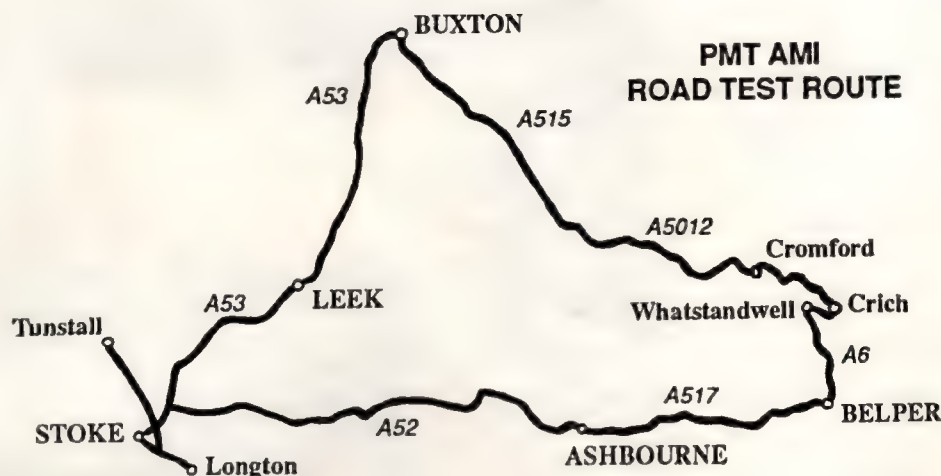
24 volt negative earth.
2 x 12 volt 88 Ah battery.
28V/55A alternator.

Wheels and Tyres

6 x 17.5 rims with 205/75R 17.5 tubeless radial tyres

Fuel Tank

Capacity 125 litres (27.5 gallons)



Own Design

There is inevitable loyalty towards PMT Engineering (the former central works) by the bus operating side of the former Potteries Motor Traction Co. A significant proportion of vehicle output being for PMT. Time for design and development work is limited because of demands on the production side. For this reason the AMI front was designed by staff and students of North Staffordshire Polytechnic.

Tony Marsh, Commercial Director for PMT Engineering told me that the college worked within very close design parameters. The body shell of the Bursley was to be retained, as was a significant proportion of the Mercedes front end, particularly the bumper. Those readers who saw the AMI at the BCC show will confirm that the overall result is visually pleasing, while retaining individuality within the modern trend of streamlined frontal aspects.

Body

Body framing is conventional steel tube, welded and anti-corrosion treated. Mioguard is applied to the chassis and injected inside the tubing. Mebond is applied to the outside of the frame. Exterior and interior panelling form a polystyrene sandwich - the exterior aluminium side panels being bonded. All windows are gasket mounted. GRP is used for side skirts, front, rear, and cove panel mouldings.

I was surprised to find a one piece GRP rear end on a service bus body. John Lloyd, works manager, who accompanied me on the test, explained that while the priority had been to redesign the front, the rear will ultimately receive attention. Lloyd wanted to incorporate a rear bumper into the bus design, and increase the boot access on the coach version.

The test vehicle had the first AMI body to bus specification for PMT. Consequently a number of features reflected that operator's needs. Cab access was via a 32 cm door-less gangway to the offside of the driver's seat. This open access, together with the lack of screens between cab and passenger environment illustrates PMT's minibus philosophy of encouraging driver/passenger communication. The passenger seating layout has been designed to allow maximum circulation space. A luggage pen was located behind the driver in line with three single seats and three 800 mm doubles. The nearside featured double seats of differing widths. Four 900 mm seats were located towards the front and three 800 mm seats at the point where the gangways narrows to 54 cm. A 28 seating capacity was made up with the usual rear bench seat. Lloyd stressed a range of options and seating permutations was available to customers.

Although needlecord was applied to the roof, the interior was not entirely soft trim - side panels being faced with formica. Two dog-toothed marked steps take passengers to the flat saloon floor. Flooring was with standard Treadmaster, but an interesting

variation was shown on the BCC show bus, which featured a one-piece floor covering by French manufacturer Tarabus.

All handrails were finished with a high-visibility plastic coating together with moulded plastic grips. This feature was complemented by Diptac type bell-pushes.

Chassis

Significantly PMT Engineering has shown restraint with its modification of the Mercedes Benz 811 chassis. Headlamps, bumper, windscreen wipers, front dash and demister system have been retained. Some under bonnet components, such as air filter, screen wash and power steering reservoir, have been relocated to aid access and servicing.

Fuel Consumption

Odometer reading - start 00071 km
- finish 00208 km
Total distance covered 137 km (85.1316 miles)
Fuel used 23.1846 litres (5.1 gallons)
Average fuel consumption 16.6947 mpg

Recent Coachmart road test comparisons

Renault S75/Reeve Burgess	16.64 mpg
Mercedes Benz 814D/North West Coach Sales	19.00 mpg
Leyland Swift/Elme Orion	19.62 mpg
Metrorider coach	15.90 mpg

NB: All vehicles were tested unloaded, but different test routes were used in each case.

ROAD TEST

As a consequence of a chassis shortage at the time of build the test AMI was not fitted with the appropriate 3.9:1 rear axle ratio for bus use. This meant that the chassis performance is better judged against the requirements of a coach, whereas the body specification is very much that of an urban mini-bus.

Test Route

A compromise test route was used to test both intensive town routes and difficult rural roads in the Derbyshire Peak District. In a plan to phase out lower capacity mini-buses PMT require the AMI for high frequency local service work and this was what I sought to replicate on the first part of the test.

Minilink

The roads within the famous five towns are served by an equal mixture of PMT big bus and PMT Minilink services. I quickly became aware that this was the first public outing for the AMI. The combination of striking Best Impressions livery with the modernistic styling encouraged the many PMT drivers we passed to combine their usual gesture of

Costs

28 seat + 14 standees as tested
£34,000 (ex VAT)
33 coach from £36,000 (ex VAT)

Prices of sample replacement parts

Windscreen	£268.24
Side Window	£28.43
Roof Hatch	£93.00
Wiper Blades	£14.50
Headlight Unit	£80.25
Front Flasher Lens	£17.85
Repeater Lens	£3.14
Rear Lens	£16.05
Air Filter	£29.40
Wiper Motor	£84.20
Brake Pads	£78.95
Brake Shoes	£11.25 each
Clutch Cover	£135.30
Clutch Plate	£110.00
Clutch Bearing	£75.90
Oil Filter	£5.48
Fuel Filter	£5.96
(Box Panel 3)	

Performance

Gear	Ratio	Top speed
1st	6.17:1	12 mph
2nd	3.34:1	22 mph
3rd	1.89:1	35 mph
4th	1.32:1	49 mph
5th	1.00:1	62 mph

Acceleration

0-30 mph 13 secs
0-50 mph 38 secs

Lowest comfortable speed in top gear
- 25 mph



Although the cab partition is a rigid open structure, a gap on the off-side enables the driver to get to the wheel. A large passenger circulation area is provided with the 28 seat configuration.

recognition with an admiring nod of approval.

I took the bus on the 'main-line' between Tunstall and Longton and found that from a driver's point of view it was a very acceptable vehicle. Even with manual gearbox the bus was easy to drive in urban traffic. Clutch operation was light - the gear change positive, although 1st and reverse were more difficult. Visibility presented few problems, apart from a minor complaint about front nearside judgement when manoeuvring in tight situations.

The ride quality at 'town speed' was very adequate. However, I was conscious of the incorrect rear axle ratio for this type of work. Fifth gear was rarely engaged, because fourth felt more comfortable and capable of providing some acceleration. At the other end of the ratios I considered first gear necessary for starting with a fully loaded bus, particularly when on any sort of incline. Otherwise there would be a strain on drive-train components. Service bus drivers may be tempted to rely on second gear, or even third, because of their convenient location within the extended 'H' arrangement of the five speed gear selection.

Peak District

After a pause for photographs at the Gladstone Pottery Museum we returned to the centre of Stoke before embarking across the Peak

District partially covering the tracks of PMT's longer service routes. Many PMT Knyperes were passed and a comparison with this larger vehicle became inevitable.

The symbolic turning point on the test was the recently erected Red Lion at the National Tram Museum, Crich. This statue once guarded a Stoke public house. Before demolition the Red Lion was a popular retreat for employees of the tramway workshops, which co-incidentally is now the birth place of the AMI.

My deviation from the main road to Crich was a good excuse to test a typical rural route. With narrow roads, steep hills and small towns this environment proved ideal AMI territory - my only concern being to avoid damaging its high gloss paint finish on overhanging trees.

Ride Comfort

Unladen the AMI felt very light at the rear. However, from a driver's view point it was responsive and controllable. Wisely PMT have retained the M-B driver's seat, re-covering it to match the passenger seat moquette. This seat requires no additional sophistication to add to its comfort. The range of adjustment together with its firm but accommodating design provided a comfortable eight hour drive. However, some limitations on the application of the 811 as a PSV were revealed during our Peak District excursion. Ride comfort at the rear can become very unpleasant. This is in extreme



Pictured while being refuelled at the end of the test, the AMI shows off its neat lines and one-piece GRP rear end. The exhaust tail pipe projects below the registration plate. In this location it proved relatively vulnerable to grounding.

ROAD TEST



With 70cm entrance door, passengers have direct access for fare payment to the driver.

contrast to the driver's experience. The extended rear overhang effectively placing back seat passengers at the end of a spring board - a problem by no means restricted to the AMI or to Mercedes. With heavier chassis design the Knype is a better proposition for longer routes.

Verdict

My appraisal must be qualified by the limitations of a one-day test with a brand new vehicle, matched to a 3.64:1 rear axle. However, the Mercedes Benz 811 chassis performed in a manner justifying its popularity in the 28-33 seat market sector. A very practical and attractive vehicle results from its marriage with AMI bus bodywork.

I considered the AMI's acceleration within town to be verging on lively. However, the measured performance I recorded looks positively lethargic. Any judgement must take account of the fact that all mechanical components were very new and certainly not 'run-in'.

The many hilly parts of the route were attacked with relative ease so any reservations I may have about the chassis's

performance are restricted to top end performance. Opportunities to legally exceed 50 mph were not only few but tempered by heavy traffic. However, I encountered a certain reluctance on the part of the bus to go very much faster.

Given a 'freeing-off' with additional use and an open road I am confident that performance figures can be improved. In this respect a two day test would have enabled me to stretch the vehicle's performance and assess it over a wider variety of roads.

John Lloyd told me that from a mechanical point of view 'Mercedes have got it right'. I can confirm that the chassis components have a quality feel and encourage the perception of a long-life vehicle. This view is reinforced by the taut, rattle-free nature of the body.

Conclusion

My visit to PMT Engineering was a reminder, not only of the distant days of Potteries Electric Traction tram operation, but of the ill-fated Daimler Roadliners, which characterised PMT between 1966 and 1976. I saw part of a 17 vehicle AMI order in build for

PMT. Nothing could contrast more with those costly and unsuitable Roadliners.

Within three weeks of displaying the Glen Coaches AMI at the BCC show, a further four coach versions have been ordered - the most recent for Way Mini-coaches, Chelmsford and Interliner Coaches, London.

Taking purchase price together with running costs, it is easy to explain the popularity of AMI-sized vehicles, which can be driven on a class three licence.

Add the customer care possibilities with smaller vehicles and the potential for market penetration, then a strong logic develops. Although passenger approval will be tempered by the ride quality at the rear and intrusive front engine noise.

With the AMI PMT Engineering have demonstrated an ability to capitalise on its experience by developing a modern product that is not only economical to operate, but has a compelling subtlety of design.

Vehicle Assessment

Engine/Transmission

Very good. Although rear axle ratio suited for coach or rural bus applications - not urban minibus applications.

Brakes

Very progressive - good feel. Particularly with the exhaust brake switched in.

Steering

Light - not enough road feel.

Roadholding

Unladen the bus felt light, particularly at the rear, which became skittish on rough roads and deterred enthusiastic driving.

Controls

(a) Switches - standard Mercedes Dash - clear and unconfused. Within easy reach.

(b) Pedals - good quality feel.

(b) Gearchange - very well located, but 1st and reverse balked.

(c) Handbrake - not heavy, but a long reach.

Visibility

I particularly liked the positioning and type of mirrors. No blind spots or problems with rain or vibration. Standard MB wipers provided adequate coverage of single curvature windscreen, but large area at top of screen unswept.

Space

Excellent circulation area at expense of seating. Cab space with fixed partition gives plenty of space for ticket machine and cash handling. Two metre headroom in saloon, but narrow body build results in risk of tall passengers banging their heads in doorway.

Noise

Engine noise very intrusive - acceptable as service bus. Exhaust brake increases noise.

Heating

Purmo convection fitted to near side. No thermostat, but tap located at front adjacent to passenger door.

Lighting

Four roof mounted fluorescent tubes with defusers.

Ventilation

Fixed glazing throughout. MTB supplied Scandinavian made roof vents - simple/effect design - proven on other PMT vehicles.

Attention

All routing tasks are easily reached under the front bonnet.

Options (mainly for coach application)

Full soft trim. Tinted windows. Open mesh type parcel racks. Toilet. Video. Clarion radio/cassette/PA - standard on Coach. Eberspacher. Webasto. Up to 33 bus or coach seats.

PARKING

COACHES

IN THE CAPITAL

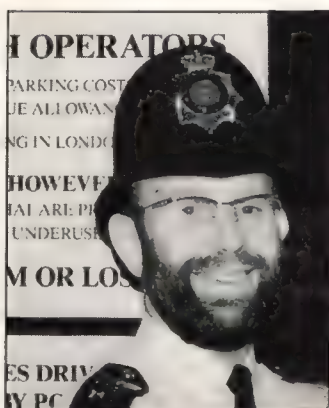
Sergeant Bob Pilbeam handed me a diagram on which the central figure was a Bobby, placed vulnerably in the midst of eight groups of people.

The purpose wasn't symbolism, but the diagram had that effect. That the police had become central to the coach parking debate was not in dispute, but whether they deserved much of the blame for the problem was less certain. Pilbeam exhibited an understandable bias.

As the diagram so eloquently explains, coach parking is the corporate responsibility of a number of groups, including the operators themselves. They were an easy target for Pilbeam.

'It has got to the stage where everyone is blaming everybody else. The coach trade keep on about coach parking, and the lack of facilities, yet are they doing anything themselves?' he said. 'To attempt to untangle this puzzle, you have to look at the types of

Mark Williams begins a three-part investigation of the appalling state of coach parking in London. Whose responsibility is it, and is there any hope of improvement? This week, the Metropolitan Police's Sergeant Bob Pilbeam gives his view.



Sgt Bob Pilbeam: At the helm

coach parking required.'

The required facilities fall into three basic categories, and two additional groups, said Pilbeam.

London-based companies doing hotel and airport tour work need short-term coach bays near their set-down/pick-up point... a place to wait while groups organise themselves.

'This group does not require long-term parking, even if the work involves several hours between set-down and pick-up,' said Pilbeam. 'In that instance, they will simply return to base.'

Companies bringing tours from outside London often require parking for four or five hours because they are usually going to only one or two tourist attractions on a day excursion. Longer-term parking is needed by long-distance and continental companies, whose drivers require immediate overnight parking on their arrival,

with good security especially since they are running high-spec vehicles.

'They don't want this parking to be miles away from the hotel, since they are working driver's hours. The tachometer will show the hours he has parked, but if he has had to get up at 6 a.m. to collect the vehicle, and has missed his breakfast, the tachometer won't show how knackered he is,' Pilbeam pointed out.

Two other groups make demands on London's minimal parking: evening theatre coaches, and commuter/express vehicles - the latter requiring a terminal to replace Victoria.

'The whole of what used to be the GLC area has a ban on street parking after 6.30 pm,' said Pilbeam. 'This has an obvious effect on the theatre coaches. We've all seen the coaches parked along Victoria Embankment in the evening, and that too is illegal. We consider that there should be

LONDON COACH PARKING CONUNDRUM

Resident/Tourist

The tourist wants low-cost transport direct to the destination, and to be picked up without any need to walk or wait. Coaches may be loathed by the resident when parked or waiting, apart from on the two or three occasions each year when resident becomes tourist.

Local authority/government

Encourage tourism to their areas but make no plans for the coaches that bring tourists. Coaches are unpopular with the voters, so get little attention.

Coach parking

Little interest in coach parking, which is a poor investment. Those available have poor quality, high prices and no facilities for the driver.

Coach driver

Anxious to provide the best service to the passenger, he may block roads, park on crossings and even stay at attraction, thus denying other drivers access to pick-up points, etc.



Hotels and attractions

Both love coachloads of tourists but, in London, regard the vehicles as a nuisance. The coach - and sometimes driver - is ignored as if it will by magic disappear.

Tour operator

Wants good accommodation, holiday and comfortable vehicles but pays little or no attention to the difficulties which face drivers when the coach stops work.

Coach operator

Expects the driver to find parking but offers little in the way of incentive - perhaps parking vouchers, information, or demanding receipts for parking charges.

Operators and drivers may say they enforce the law too rigidly, while residents may say the opposite.

PARKING

coach parking in non-residential areas such as this until around 11.30 pm.'

As for commuter and express services - desperately in need of a new terminal - the best that can currently be hoped for is 30 parking spaces in the Paddington development plan which swamped hopes of Paddington becoming the new 'Victoria'.

The Paddington example highlights the real problem of London - high property prices. The fact is, there's no money in coach parking. Pilbeam wouldn't comment on the politics of the situation, and rightly so. But it's plain that, with no interest in providing these facilities from the private sector, public money is required.

The demise of the GLC meant no central coach parking policy, and none of the boroughs want to pick up the tab, partly because of the expense but also because they don't want to 'attract' coaches to their borough. Parked coaches are undesirable to the voting public, so no-one will carry the can for their provision. The parking which has been provided is always subject to redevelopment, and that will be the fate of the Vauxhall coach park - the biggest in London - not a stone's throw from Pilbeam's office.

Pilbeam is quite specific about the responsibility of hotels and tourist attractions to provide coach parking: 'Quite a few London hotels have got off-street parking facilities but many won't let coaches into them. They give these over to taxis and limousines. With both of these modes of transport carrying around two guests, and coaches carrying 50, it's sometimes hard to see the logic.'

It's Pilbeam's personal opinion that provision for coach parking should be a condition of planning consent for new tourist attractions: 'For example, Tussauds have just opened their Rock Circus at Piccadilly, in the Pavilion. Now, if there is no coach parking, and this is as successful as Madame



A common sight... an impromptu set-down point.



A rare sight... one in which coaches can park.

Tussauds, we've got a nightmare situation in Picadilly. It will be a traffic jam all day long.'

'In London, many tourists attractions like the passengers but don't want to know about the coach... they turn a blind eye to it.

I'd like to see both tourist attractions and hotels at least give a voucher for coach parking as a driver incentive.'

Tour operators contribute to illegal parking, says Pilbeam, by packing so much into an itinerary

that the driver hasn't time to reach proper parking, rest, and get back to the next pick-up point. The easy way out is to park illegally and risk the £20 fine... still a better option than losing a licence through running the coach for too long without a break.

He says operators should quote customers for parking charges, and insist that drivers produce a receipt for parking on their return. That would certainly help the police, and would help highlight the problem for drivers, operators and for the customer.

In all, there are upwards of 500 coach parking spaces available daily in London, and Pilbeam believes that to be enough to cope: 'The trouble is, they are in the wrong places,' he admits, 'And they have no services - cafes and such like - for the drivers.'

The word 'believes' is used advisedly, since no-one seems to know just how many coaches are plying the streets every day. A report prepared by the UCL's transport studies group is still with the Department of Transport, but should soon help Pilbeam to be more certain.

In the meantime, the Police continue to fine drivers for parking illegally, Pilbeam continues to advise operators in order to avoid that happening, and redevelopment continues to avoid the question of public transport altogether.

The 'blame' for London's horrific coach parking problem certainly doesn't lie with the Police. It may well lie with local government and tourist attractions, who come under the magnifying glass next week...

Sgt Bob Pilbeam is happy to provide advice to any coach operator visiting London. Write to him at The Metropolitan Police Coach Advisory Service, Tintagel House, Albert Embankment, London SE1 7TT, or 'phone 01 230 5332 if your enquiry is very urgent. The Coach Advisory Service can supply maps and details of coach parking.



Profit Conference pays rich dividends

THE CLOSE of Coachmart's London Finance for Profit Conference last Tuesday saw many operators making new plans as they left the Selfridge Hotel.

An array of speakers talking about subjects as diverse as computerisation and chartered accountancy provoked a great deal of thought, and there was a general consensus of opinion that, no matter how good your business, it can be improved.

In particular, the theme which emerged was that operators needed to pay more attention to costing, target the most profitable customers, and generate additional profit when demand is at its peak. Peter Rogers, managing director of Rainworth Travel, was anxious to hammer these points home when he opened the day with his talk on margin schemes.

'We are told that the average profitability of the coaching industry is around 8.5 percent,' said Peter. 'That is less than half the normal return on business, and is a frightening indictment of our industry.'

'There's nothing wrong with a low-price operation, but that's not the same as running high-spec vehicles and selling their services on the cheap.'



Peter Rogers emphasises a vital point.

Rogers went on to say that poor profitability was sometimes the result of a poor understanding of the way in which VAT is applied to tour packages and excursions, and that miscalculation of these figures would influence package pricing.

'Cost equals turnover minus profit,' said Rogers, an equation which was echoed throughout the day by other speakers, and which hinted that the emphasis should be

The Coachmart 'Finance for Profit' conferences at London and York proved an amazing success for operators and organisers alike, with capacity audiences at both venues. News Editor Mark Williams reports.



Part of the capacity audience at the York conference.

on accurate costing. Rogers went on to elaborate on the theory of VAT apportioning.

Chartered accountants Bill Blythe and Phil Jackson, of Grant Thornton, proved that their much-maligned profession was anything but boring, and that management accounting could put cash in the coffers on a day-to-day basis.

'The function of management accounting is not to determine profit but to pre-determine it,' said Blythe. 'It's not annual accounting, in which the figures provided give too little information, too late. Management accounting can take the uncertainty out of the decisions you all have to make each week.'

Blythe pointed out that the awkward customers are those which demand most management effort but often produce the least profit: 'Bringing the full cost burden on to a piece of work takes some doing,' he said... and his colleague Jackson went on to explain why this was so.

Jackson's talk centred on the accurate calculation of costing, and demonstrated the differences between fixed costs, variable costs and semi-variable costs. His equation produced a graph which showed clearly how, when activity of a company was at its lowest, severe losses could be incurred.

Back to Blythe, then, who was anxious to show how good management accounting could give operators a price per mile or per

hour for each vehicle, so that quotes could take every factor into account before the profit margin was added.

'Accurate vehicle analysis is crucial,' said Blythe. 'The vehicle does work for you, and only when you watch its performance over a period of time can you get a feel for its efficiency.'

Efficiency was the theme of David Colliver's presentation. Colliver, director of Havelet Leasing, was forthright about his views of coach operation, and had some coach owners hot under the collar by the time he'd finished.

After pointing out the differences between the various forms of lease and hire, Colliver underlined the facts that an operating lease is 100 percent financed, is a revenue expense for which rentals are taken from the profit and loss account, it frees bank lines, hedges against inflation, the rental charges are totally tax deductible, and it gives regular payment of known rental figures. What's more, it does not involve the operator in disposing of the vehicle, no matter how poor the secondhand market is.

One operator in the audience claimed leasing forced prices of secondhand vehicles down, while another was convinced that eventual ownership of the coach was crucial. In answer to a critic who claimed leasing left the way open to 'cowboys', with no financial commitment to the

business, to come into coaching, Colliver was quick to defend his company.

'That is not true,' he said. 'Any customer is vetted very thoroughly, including an investigation of his full business history. He is not likely to get a lease unless he can show us contracts and evidence of assets.'

A definite asset to the operator was, said DAF UK bus and coach operations manager Dave Skinner, the TOPEC software system of vehicle operating analysis. Projecting an image from his portable computer on to the screen, Skinner demonstrated how the instrument could perform a complex calculation of vehicle operating costs to produce a cost per mile.

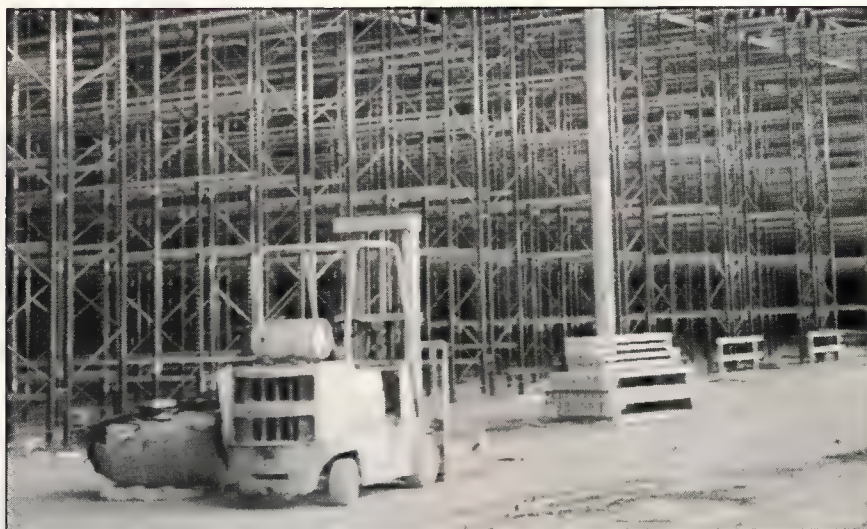
Computers can also save the operator a small fortune in staff costs and produce neat documents which say a great deal about his business, said Michael Eaton, the managing director of software specialists Mundy Computer Services.

Drawing as his example an operator who saves just one hour every week using computers, and gains one extra job worth £130 in that hour, Eaton demonstrated that the operator could achieve a further £4,500 in turnover.

Adequate training will soon solve the immediate problems of unfamiliarity, he added, and that most computer firms offer this service at nominal cost because it is to their benefit that the operator does not pester the supplier with difficulties.

At the close of conference, it was clear that the broad spectrum of speakers had given the audience much food for thought, and that the discussions weren't over. One operator's final word was that he would be happy if the talks went into greater depth.

● Places are still available on Coachmart's final conference 'Image to increase sales', at the Kensington Palace Hotel, London, on November 27. Costing just £29.95, the conference features talks from marketing experts from many fields, and could seriously improve your bookings! Get your company representative there by 'phoning Jean Jarvis on 0733 63100



Racking in place at Lutterworth ready to distribute Leyland parts from January.

INTERNATIONAL mergers and takeovers may often make global sense, but their effect can be more disturbing to the small businesses caught in their wake.

That could have been a real danger in the aftermath of Volvo's acquisition of Leyland Bus last year. For, while it made great sense for Volvo to buy additional manufacturing and design capacity inside the EEC, where did it leave the thousands of operators of Leyland buses and coaches? Would they find that Swedish ownership would drive them to replace their older vehicles sooner than they planned?

What, for instance, would happen to the parts supplies for the Leyland Leopards which continue to carry many of the nation's schoolchildren, for the AEC Reliances which now are at least 10 years old, for Bristol LHs or even Routemasters, Lodekkas or Leyland PD3s?

For, in buying Leyland, Volvo has fallen heir to much of the history of post-war UK bus production. It could keep that fleet of ageing, but still cost-effective, vehicles running or it could render them unusable by a single cavalier approach to parts support.

By investing £20 million in a dedicated parts centre for Leyland and Volvo bus and coach parts, Volvo gave a clear, early signal that it intends to support the entire parc of Leyland buses worldwide. That centre, run by the Volvo Parts Corporation, has been built at Lutterworth in Leicestershire and is being stocked up ready to take over all Leyland parts responsibilities for the UK and overseas from January 1.

It is known within Volvo as C3. C1 is in Sweden and handles Volvo's home market. C2 is in Belgium and handles parts for the EEC, the USA and Australia.

THE SECRETS OF C3

Alan Millar looks at the investment Volvo is making in providing Leyland operators with a dedicated parts service from the beginning of next year.

Its history is simple. Leyland, as an integrated bus and truck manufacturer, had an integrated parts operation based at Chorley. When Leyland Bus was sold to its management in 1987, it made sense to continue with that arrangement even after DAF acquired control of the truck and parts businesses. But it made no sense for Volvo to hand DAF control of its parts parts business, hence the very quick decision to commit such a huge sum so quickly to bringing parts under its control.

From January 1, every genuine Leyland bus part for any Leyland, AEC, Bristol or Daimler bus or coach will be available from Lutterworth and Leyland DAF will cease to be responsible for providing this total parts supply.

Parts have been going into Lutterworth for the past month, 54 experienced personnel have been recruited and trained to run the centre and test deliveries to franchised dealers will have been run before C3 goes into full operation. Dealers' parts ordering systems are being updated to handle Leyland parts.

'Operators don't have to be

concerned about there being no supply on January 1,' says VL Bus and Coach parts manager Norman McIlwraith.

By 1992, Volvo bus and coach parts for the UK will also be handled by C3, but Leyland parts are the first priority.

Paul De Backer, general manager at C3, moved from C2 and his native Belgium to set up the new centre. He readily admits that mistakes made there and at C1 have provided useful lessons to help increase the chances of a successful launch in January, but he also points out how much Volvo is doing to improve the quality of parts service to Leyland operators.

'We are now checking that materials meet Volvo's specification and we will have three dimensional measuring equipment to ensure that they match our standards.

'We have 200,000 microfiches with our specifications and, from the microfiche we have an instruction to measure parts. We will measure a sample of parts, depending on the function of that part. The sample will go up to 100 percent on most safety related

items.

'This brings a Volvo quality inspection system on to our suppliers who have not had anything like this from Leyland,' he says.

Because of the age and diverse specifications of the Leyland bus parc, and the need to avoid falling foul of product liability laws, Volvo must stock Leyland parts for longer but also keep them up to standard.

For example, rubber which could perish after two years will be prepacked and labelled so that order pickers only despatch parts within the proper date.

Parts distribution will also take a big step forward with the opening of C3, for the daily parts ordering system already familiar to the truck industry will be extended to the bus and coach business.

Operators will be able to order parts on any day of the week, with a four to five working day turnaround for stock orders and a daily emergency service.

There are more exciting plans to use bar codes to help with parts stock management within the next three years. Then, not only will parts be reordered as they are taken from shelves, but delivery drivers will be able to run their reader pens over bar coded documentation and store the information of delivery times on portable computers on their van. De Backer is already looking at systems in use in France and plans to adapt these.

The systems in use from January may be less sophisticated, but Volvo's determination to provided the most comprehensive dedicated bus and coach parts service in the UK shows good sign of offering operators a higher standard of parts availability than has been possible before.

No such thing as a free lunch

Sir

May I come back on Geoff Stephenson's comment (Coachmart 28 September) on my own earlier remarks about the free market.

What Geoff says about the private car is absolutely right, and you will find that I have emphasised it strongly in my book on Marketing Management in the bus and coach industry. But the idea that governments have some absolute responsibility to provide accessibility to essential services is to be set against the observation that governments cannot deliver, without distorting the market, to everyone's disadvantage.

Furthermore, there is no way in which the better off can be discouraged from cashing in on the subsidy required. And since the better off are often more mobile, and may have more reason for non-essential travel, the outcome can only be a regressive tax, which takes from the worse off to support the better!

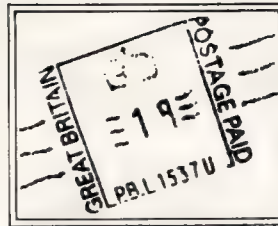
As to social service being a 'dirty word', and the situation in

overseas countries, Geoff Stephenson must face two other questions. One is to explain why 'public conveniences' in Britain tend to be nasty, dirty and smelly; the other is whether we want interventionist government policies (never mind from what political party) that must require curtailment of liberty of choice over an increasingly wide spectrum.

I agree that we used to be proud of our bus service, and of our National Health Service. But that was before we were forced to realise that public funds for the provision of free goods (free at the point of consumption, that is - there is no such thing as a free lunch) must always be limited.

And as to the bus service, I suspect it was before the era of massive network subsidy began to weaken the cutting edge of management that we were proud of it.

John Hibbs
Director of Transport Studies
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Nostalgia Corner



Don's of Dunmow featured in Coachmart issue 289 (July 13th, 1984). Since those days of early Coachmarts, the company has re-acquired this 1957 Bedford SBG with Yeates Europa 41 seat bodywork.

Although purchased by Don's when 18 months old, the coach

was described in 1984 as having been:

'...extensively used on a wide variety of tours and private hires in the early sixties, and featured on the cover of all the early publicity and brochures'. The vehicle faithfully carried the Don's fleetname for over 20 years, being eventually sold to preservationists and appearing at many rallies in recent years'.

General Manager Bill Cooper told Coachmart that the Bedford had since returned to the Essex operator and with a class 5 MOT regularly appears at rallies in original red and cream livery. The ornate Yeates bodywork contrasts with the modern Plaxton Paramount bodied Leylands in Don's 14 vehicle fleet.

The Yeates bodywork of the period was being sold in a very active 41 seat market. Before departing from the coach building scene the Europa became available with the Bedford chassis modified to provide an entrance ahead of the front axle - a development predicting later models from Bedford and Ford.

satisfactory, well that was to be expected, we have three fully qualified mechanics in a modern seven year old purpose-built service garage with three full length pits. Our track record in the past for vehicle maintenance has been as good as any operator, and our road safety record, considering the millions of miles covered since 1947 has been absolutely excellent.

I can assure you this has been an eye opener for me and with more new vehicles on order we will speed up our investment plan and our company will go from strength to strength.

B A Clarke
Westbourne Motors
St Austell
Cornwall

change in maintenance staff because the previous staff were not suitable, otherwise we would have never received the prohibitions in the first place. I also said that there was a bad atmosphere in the garage and we had a complete lack of co-operation. As to the engine oil leaks, he failed to report that on three vehicles in particular the regulator control screw on the pumps had the seals broken and were opened up to maximum.

This caused the engines to over rev and vibrate which in turn caused oil leaks. As a final result one engine had a piston go through the block and all three vehicles have had to have replacement engines. It was reported the condition of vehicles examined during a maintenance investigation in April was

Putting the record straight

Sir

OUR ADVERSE PUBLICITY
IN YOUR ISSUE 557
ENTITLED "WESTBOURNE
RAPPED OVER
MAINTENANCE"

It rather surprised me to say the least, as to the way this story was covered, and to note that some very important bits were left out. The journalist did not report that six out of the twelve prohibitions were prior to August 1988 when the previous Transport Manager was employed by the Company. He also failed to report that Mr Pike from the Department of Transport stood up and said that most of the prohibitions were for minor defects such as oil leaks and a loose exhaust bracket. It was reported that we have had a

TWO YEAR LICENCE FOR ABBEYWAYS

Because of the large increase in vehicle authorisation sought by Halifax based Traject Ltd, trading as Abbeyways, the North Eastern Traffic Commissioner, Mr Frederick Whalley, renewed the company's PSV operators licence for a two year period only, at a Leeds public inquiry.

The company, which had held a licence authorising 12 vehicles, was seeking authority to operate 40 vehicles, namely two minibuses, 36 single deckers of which six would be 20 to 29 seaters, and two double deckers.

Department of Transport vehicle examiner Mr Alan Dyson said that he had carried out a maintenance investigation in May. Five vehicles were examined, all of which received defect notices. The vehicles had all come straight off service and none of the defects were of a serious nature. Inspections were carried out at intervals of four to six weeks and there were comprehensive maintenance records. Of the 12 vehicles, four were being maintained by the company from which they were hired, one was maintained in-house by a sister company, and the rest were sent to the main dealer for maintenance.

There was no driver defect reporting system, but he was told that defect sheets would be made available to the drivers in the future. Inspections were being carried out at the specified intervals, with intermediate checks as required. The company had no maintenance staff of its own. There were maintenance facilities at one of its depots, but he was told that they would never be used. He thought that the company's three operating centres were only capable of holding 29 vehicles.

Questioned by Mr Whalley, Mr Dyson said that he was content with the state of the vehicles. None had been neglected or were in a dangerous condition. The maintenance of the additional vehicles would not be a problem if it was undertaken by outside

contractors.

Mr Stephen Ives, a director, said that the other director was his wife Susan. They had applied for the additional vehicles because of the policy of the West Yorkshire PTE that an operator must have sufficient vehicles on his licence for any services he tendered for. A 40 vehicle licence would enable the company to tender for contract services. The company was currently going from strength to strength and they were doing their best to comply with the law.

Producing bank statements and accounts, Mr Ives said that last year's accounts showed a loss due to a write off for tax purposes. The balance had gone down due to depreciation. The additional vehicles would either be leased or acquired on hire purchase.

Mr Whalley commented that there seemed to be enough money in the company.

Questioned by Mr Whalley, Mr Ives undertook that each vehicle would have a duplicate driver

defect report book, with effect from the beginning of December. He said that 32 vehicles would be based at Huddersfield and Halifax and 12 at Mirfield. There was also another site in Vincent Street, Halifax which the company proposed using as an operating centre.

Mr Whalley said that site had not been specified in the application. If a licence was granted, he expected the vehicles to be kept at the specified operating centres and nowhere else.

Mr Dyson pointed out that the site concerned was already specified as an operating centre on another licence.

For the company, Mr Ralph Peggs said that the licence would be surrendered if the company were authorised to use Vincent Street. If they were unable to do so, the only way round for the present was for the Commissioner to grant the number of vehicles he felt was right and proper.

Mr Whalley said that though it

*licensing
&
legal*

**WEEKLY REPORT
ON LAW
AND THE
COACH OPERATOR**

By Michael Jewell

had not been included in the application, he would take account of the fourth operating centre, conditional upon the licence currently held for that centre being surrendered.

Asked about convictions for failing to display PSV 'O' licence discs on two vehicles, (Coachmart, September 28th,) Mr Ives said that the drivers had picked up the vehicles concerned after maintenance had been carried out. Although the drivers had repeatedly been told about changing the discs over, it had obviously not occurred on those two occasions and the vehicles were found running on local services without any disc displayed. It could not happen again, as the maintenance system had been changed. The vehicles were no longer swapped around. When a vehicle now returned to the hire company for maintenance they were not given another vehicle in its place. They got the same vehicle back and they rarely had any changes in the fleet.

After Mr Ives's attention had been drawn to a letter from the Traffic Area, dated October, concerning a failure to notify changes in vehicles, he said that according to the company's records, the Traffic Area had been



notified of the changes in March 1989.

Mr Whalley said that he was just making the point that it was a condition on the licence that changes of vehicles be notified, and that he would be inclined to take action against the licence if

changes were not notified in the future.

In his decision, Mr Whalley said that the company was seeking a large increase in the vehicle authorisation. He had some reservations about the ability of the company to

maintain that number of vehicles and keep the statements of intention in relation to maintenance. Everything appeared to be fine from what he had been told during the public inquiry, but it might be a different story in practice. A two year

licence would give time to assess the business and an opportunity of an early review. His decision did not mean that the company could not apply for additional vehicles during the next two years, if it felt it necessary to do so.

Duration and vehicles cut in M&E renewal

The licence held by Mr John Batrick and Mrs Margaret Brown, trading as M & E Coaches, of Blackburn, has been renewed for a 12 months period only, and with an authorisation of eight vehicles, only three of which are to be double deckers, instead of the 10 vehicles applied for.

The partners appeared at a public inquiry in Manchester, before the North Western Traffic Commissioner Mr Martin Albu, in the light of the maintenance history of their vehicles and convictions recorded against them.

At the outset, Mr Albu said that the renewal application had been initially lodged in March seeking authority to operate 10 single deckers. Variation was then made to the existing licence for the inclusion of one double decker, and that vehicle was now in possession. A subsequent variation seemed to show that the partners now wanted authority for 10 double deckers.

For the partners, Mr John Backhouse said that they did not want to operate 10 double decked vehicles. They wanted three double deckers at a maximum. He maintained that the maintenance facilities were capable of looking after double deckers. Department of Transport vehicle examiner Mr Alban Jackson said that a number of the partners' vehicles had been examined in December 1988 by prior arrangement. That had resulted in the issue of one immediate prohibition notice and one delayed prohibition.

A police operation in September 1988 led to the imposition of three immediate and two delayed prohibitions on M & E vehicles, and the partners were subsequently prosecuted at three different courts. Before the Blackburn Magistrates, they were fined £75 for a defective emergency door and £250 for dangerous brakes, being ordered

to pay £30 prosecution costs. At Accrington, they were fined £300 for two dangerous brakes offences, and £75 for a defective tyre. At Clitheroe, they were fined £200 for dangerous parts and £150 for dangerous brakes, being ordered to pay £60 prosecution costs. Mr Batrick also had his driving licence endorsed with three penalty points.

As a result of the partners application for authority to operate double deckers, a maintenance investigation was carried out in June. Prior notice had been given and it was obvious that preparatory work had been carried out. A total of seven vehicles were looked at. One vehicle was given a defect notice for five items, one vehicle a delayed prohibition for three items, one vehicle a delayed prohibition for two items, and one vehicle an immediate prohibition for one item. The operator had been advised of the defect on the latter vehicle during the course of its annual test. The door of the vehicle concerned was capable of being opened while the vehicle was moving and that was illegal. All the defects found were of an obvious nature.

Mr Jackson said that arrangements for inspections were very vague and the record keeping was of poor quality. The firm's premises were generally dirty and in an unkempt condition. There were two inspection pits, but access was only adequate to one. At the time of his visit, one skilled fitter and one semi-skilled bodyman were employed. There was a driver defect reporting system, but it did not appear to be in use at the time. There was no effective planned maintenance and because Mr Batrick was out driving he was not available when inspections were carried out. It appeared that he spent too much time driving and not enough time managing. Additional vehicles would lead to a deterioration in an already overloaded maintenance system.

Mr Backhouse said that an appeal in relation to the penalties imposed at Clitheroe had resulted in the fine for the dangerous parts offence being reduced to £50 and the endorsement of Mr Batrick's driving licence being removed. The brake defects were all related to the parking brake. The excise licence of the vehicle given the

immediate prohibition for the defective door had expired at the time of its examination and was not being renewed.

Mr Jackson said that he had been told by the fitter that it was an operational vehicle.

Asked by Mr Albu whether there had been any changes made at the premises during the time he had been visiting the firm, Mr Jackson said that a second pit had been sunk and derelict vehicles had been moved. The yard had been cleared but the workshop was still in a disorganised state. The firm were only able to work on one double decker under cover at any one time. There was no difficulty in regard to the parking arrangements.

Mr Batrick said that he and Mrs Brown also traded as Harrison Motor Coaches. They undertook school contracts and service work and they had been doing such work for 20 years without any complaint.

There had been changes in the nature of the business as a result of the prosecutions. Because of a clause in the contracts held with Lancashire County Council, requiring a service to be given to the next highest tenderer and make up the difference to the County for a three month period if the holder could not fulfil the contract, they had been unable to tender for any contracts. He was awaiting the outcome of the present proceedings before submitting any tenders.

The firm now only operated one local service, between Accrington and Blackburn. Consequently, the total mileage operated by the vehicles had been reduced. Three vehicles were needed on that service, which ran for 10 hours a day, six days a week. The double decked vehicle was not used on the local service, but on National Express work on their Manchester to London route. It mainly operated at the weekends, and that



was the route on which he drove himself.

Mr Battrick said they currently held 10 licence identity discs and had 12 vehicles in possession. Two of the vehicles were unlicensed and untaxed, including the one given the immediate prohibition. The tax on that vehicle had expired at the end of March. They had been advised about the door when it went in for annual test. The vehicle was to be sold, so they did not repair the door but decided to tell the new owner when the vehicle was sold.

The maintenance staff currently consisted of a qualified fitter and himself. Though he personally was not qualified, he was experienced. They had had two fitters and one body repairer, but due to the reduction in contracts and mileage the staff had been reduced. If new contracts were entered into, the staff would be increased again.

Accounts produced showed that the firm were operating profitably, said Mr Battrick. Inspections were carried out every four to six weeks and there were more than enough vehicles in possession to replace the vehicles being inspected. There was a system of maintenance records. The driver defect reporting system was not used as each driver saw the fitter as he came in, if there was anything wrong with the vehicle. Whenever possible, repairs were carried out right away. He just drove at the weekend and occasionally on the odd school contract.

Asked why a letter from the Traffic Area, sent to the address on the licence, had been returned, Mr Battrick said that that property had been sold. The garage address was different and he would give that to the Traffic Area Office.

Asked why the firm had not complied with the condition on its licence that convictions must be notified to the Commissioner, Mr Battrick said that Mrs Brown was the secretary. She was going to notify the Traffic Area of the convictions and he had thought that she had done so. He agreed that paperwork was not one of his stronger points, saying that there were times when you could not do everything.

He said that he was not aware that the firm currently only had a one year licence as a warning because of unsatisfactory inspections by vehicle examiners.

After Mr Backhouse had said that there was no record of the one year licence being intended as a warning, and that the firm had

not been made aware of that fact, Mr Albu said that he would expect an operator to question the fact he had only been granted a one year licence. He commented that the vehicles were all fairly old and must be harder to maintain than more modern vehicles.

In reply to Mr Albu, Mr Battrick said that the firm would get further double deckers from Midland Fox.

Asked whether, if the firm went back to two fitters and a bodybuilder on the acquisition of further contracts, that would be sufficient, given the number of vehicles and their age, Mr Jackson said it should be alright, but one could only assume.

Mr Backhouse said that on appeal it had been shown that Mr Battrick had no cause to be aware of the defects to the vehicle concerned, so those convictions did not reflect on the partnership's repute. The brakes were a bit special, in that the vehicle had a third braking system and the faults only became apparent on a rolling road test. Three different courts dealing with the offences escalated the firm's costs, and though the convictions were undesirable on the record,

penalties had already been inflicted.

The most recent immediate prohibition had been issued to a vehicle which had not been used since the expiry of its excise licence. Maintenance pressure had been reduced by the reduction in work and mileage. The tidying up of the workshop needed to be an on-going process, but the firm had the staff and facilities it needed for the moment. This was not a business running on a shoestring, and he asked the Commissioner not to ban the firm from running local services.

In his decision, Mr Albu said the partners had been running for many years, but in a manner that had revealed a number of problems. There had been considerable weaknesses, which resulted in maintenance problems coming to light over the last 18 months. The firm was profitable, but not enough was being spent on maintenance facilities and maintenance activities. He did not consider that the firm's repute had been affected, but said that Mr Battrick would have to conduct his business in a more responsible manner in the future. More attention needed to be paid to



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management, and the Traffic Area needed an address where they could get in touch with Mr Battrick. A second fitter needed to be appointed who was not only experienced at getting under a bus, but who was also experienced on the managerial side in the sense of completing the paperwork.

Mr Albu said that he was renewing the licence for a period of a year to see how things got on.

Lambkin coaches banned from local service operation

The South Eastern Traffic Commissioner, Brigadier Michael Turner, has banned Mr R C Lambkin, trading as Lambkin Coaches, of Queensborough, Sheerness, from operating any local services. In addition, he has revoked Mr Lambkin's existing PSV operator's licence, and granted him a new licence authorising the operation of three vehicles for a period of 12 months only.

Mr Lambkin appeared at a Faversham public inquiry at which the Commissioner considered what action to take over maintenance problems, together with Mr Lambkin's application to renew his licence in respect of 11 vehicles.

Evidence was given that Mr Lambkin had appeared at two previous public inquiries,

because of maintenance problems, one in 1981 and the other in 1988. In 1988 the authorisation on his licence was reduced from nine to seven vehicles. Since then four immediate and two delayed prohibition notices had been imposed on Mr Lambkin's vehicles. Some of the vehicles had to be produced for clearance on several occasions before the prohibitions were eventually lifted. Inspection records produced were not signed and there was no indication of the rectification of defects in the records.

Mr Lambkin said that he had taken on an additional fitter following the last public inquiry. Unfortunately, the fitter concerned only stayed with him for a period of seven months. His wife had been responsible

for the paperwork and a lot of the problems had arisen after she became ill.

He had now got rid of one of the two fitters employed, because of the unsatisfactory state of the vehicles. He was a qualified fitter himself and in the future it was his intention to personally carry out spot checks on the condition of the vehicles, and the quality of the work being carried out. He would also ensure that the inspection records were properly completed.

Mr Lambkin said that the remaining fitter was his son, who was currently in the process of studying to obtain a Certificate of Professional Competence. Once he obtained his CPC, his son would be responsible for ensuring that the records were kept up to scratch.

BRITTANY'S ENCHANTING CASTLES

In the final part of his fact finding series focussing on Brittany, Rod Davey travels up the lower Loire Valley and then heads north, visiting the magical castles of Vitre and Fougere - before ending his tour in Dinard and St Malo.

A coach tour of Brittany including La Baule presents the opportunity of taking in the sights of the Lower Loire Valley which should not be missed.

Taking the advice of a travel journalist of long standing, Tours & Excursion's assistant editor Stuart Bowden, I avoided the Nantes to Angers Autoroute in an attempt to discover the real charm of the region. However I still managed to finish up on the main road between St Nazaire and Nantes.

But despite missing the Loire Estuary bridge and the view across the river from Paimboeuf, I found a nice 'B' road and travelled through Savenay, Oudon and St Etienne de Montluc. In the main this route has leafy lanes and charming small settlements - but is quite suitable for a coach.

We were now heading towards Nantes, which is the principal city of Western France, and provided the infrastructural link between the Atlantic Coast and the rest of France when Brittany was a fully autonomous region.

As well as being a thriving port, Nantes is a town of attractions - with the 17th century church of Sainte Croix surrounded by 15th century half-timbered houses containing croissanteries, boutiques and antique shops. There is also a fortress in the Flamboyant style, and many museums including one dedicated to Nantes' literary son Jules Verne.

The 18th century district of Nantes grew out of the triangular slave trade, with ships from the port picking up slaves in Africa and returning with sugar cane from Louisiana and the Antilles. Nantes' cathedral is a superb example of Gothic church architecture dating from 1434.

I managed to cross at the bridge in Nantes, eventually finding the



Entrance to the magical Chateau de Vitre with its charming conical towers and fairy tale imagery.

riverside road passing through Champtoceaux, St Florent and Montjean. However, this route gives a better appreciation of the Loire Atlantique region of Brittany. Of particular interest is the Montjean church - situated high on a hill overlooking the expansive valley.

Crossing to the north of the valley at Montjean, however, a



Justine inspects the 'bottomless' dungeon in the magnificent fortress of Fougères - part of Brittany's ancient defence against French and Norman incursion.

delightful climb through pleasant stone-built villages leads one to a route where small terraced vineyards lace the route. However, from here to Angers I overreached myself in a vain attempt to stick to the riverside. In between St Georges and les Ponts I fell onto a single lane road which, despite the odd passing place, is definitely infra-dig for coach use.

While I enjoyed the scenery I could not help but think of how I would feel driving a 12-metre high-spec along it. It would not be a comfortable experience. And being in the Loire flood plain, the road surmounts a dike and has high walls either side - positively ideal for leaving part of your company's livery behind in a foreign field. Despite this observation I must stress that this was the only bad road I experienced during my nine days in France.

Arriving in Angers, which is actually east of Brittany in the Maine-et-Loire area of the Maine-Anjou region, the coach tourist finds an attractive town of blue

slate roofs straddling the River Mayenne (Maine) - which feeds into the Loire at this point. In fact, Angers is the capital of Anjou, famous for wine and the arts.

The city's status is confirmed with modern electronics and computer hardware manufacture - co-existing with the traditional umbrella and slate quarrying industries. Its Fortress Chateau which incorporates no less than 17 round towers and was erected by the Count of Anjou in the 11th century as a defence against the neighbouring Count of Blois, has a marvellous tapestry of the 'Apocalypse'. It is acclaimed as a masterpiece and dates from the Middle Ages.

Angers also has other historic delights, such as the 13th century Gothic cathedral of St Maurice featuring rare stained glass featuring St Christopher with a dog's head. Numerous museums, including one for fine art, complete the picture. In addition, numerous restaurants and bistros fill the pedestrianised area around the Place du Ralliement.

Heading north up the Maine valley towards Laval unfortunately meant I had to miss the castellated town of Chateaubriant - part of the ancient defensive system of Brittany. The chateau is composed of a 13th century entrance and chapel combined with a Renaissance keep. An Inter-France contracted hotel, The Chateaubriant, has 37 rooms and exceptional discounts for groups.

Despite this omission, I managed to take in the interesting castle at Vitre. Unashamedly a tourist town, Vitre has numerous hotels of all categories and many adequate restaurants in the town's attractive old quarter. It also has a specialist tea cafe opposite the railway station - serving a variety of blends, including the more

usual Earl Grey and Assam, one would be hard pushed to demand within our own nation of tea drinkers.

La Chateau de Vitre itself dates from the 15th century - in the Gothic style, it formed part of the defensive line from Clisson to Fougères. briefly, it was restored in 1820, lost its doors in 1835 and had its facades preserved in 1842. In addition, further restorations included the Tower St Laurent in 1870, followed by the restoration of the Town Hall and le Grand Escalier du Chateau (the steps) in 1902, town houses in 1950 - with tours of the castle starting in 1970.

But beware, the spiral staircases in the museum, although charming and quite exciting, are definitely not for the elderly or infirm. However, those who are up to the climb are amply rewarded with walks on the battlements and an interesting collection of artefacts, stuffed birds - with displays of insects and butterflies.

There is also a sea shell collection and the rare enamel icons from Notre Dame de Vitre depicting the life story of Christ. These are known as the Limousin Enamels and were originally kept in the church, which is Flamboyant Gothic and naturally occupies the highest point in the town.

Not unnaturally for a tourist town, Vitre has many hotels of all categories - and is equally useful for a short tour and a meal stop. However charming Vitre is as a total entity, the Fortress at Fougères cannot be beaten.

For a similar admission price as at Vitre (adults 16FF, £1.60; and children between nine and 16 11FF, £1.10) one can walk at will along the extensive ramparts with magnificent views of the town. However, again the elderly or infirm must be excluded from this experience - and for that matter cowards - as the inner ramparts are not railed and have twenty foot drops in some places. For once, I was up to the job as I had just had lunch.

But one must not trivialise, for this must be one of the finest castles I have ever seen. It evokes illustrations of fairy tale anthologies - with dreamy conical roofed towers, drawbridges and a moat fed by water from the river Couesnon.

The original castle was built of wood on this impressive rock, which at the time was in the midst of swampland. Unfortunately the original was subjected to vandalism and burnt down - by the soccer hooligans of English absolutism led by King Henry II



Dinan's town centre has charming half timber houses converted into shops, creating a delightful atmosphere for the coach tourist.



Many of the houses in Vitre are castellated and are, in fact, part of Brittany's original defences.

of the royal house of Plantagenet.

Henry's attention was understandable, however, as Fougères Castle is strategically placed at the junction of the three provinces of Brittany, Normandy and Maine. Active defence ended with the Gothic period.

The town of Fougères, in the usual fashion, developed around the castle, with the district of St Sulpice involved in thriving tanning, drapery, flour and paper milling businesses from the 15th century. Other places of interest for the tourist include the church of St Sulpice with a fine example of an 18th century Breton chancel, the timber framed houses of the Place du Marchix and the Rue des Tanneurs.

There is also a fairly expansive Sunday street market held in the town, and when I was there all the fun of the fair had arrived. Quite an interesting cultural experience, in fact, with toffee apples replaced with crepes and hot dogs served in baguettes.

My tour ended with the practicality of the St Malo area, as I was returning to England on the Brittany Ferry to Portsmouth, including a brief exploration of Dinard and Dinan. Not to be

confused, Dinard is a marvellous seaside resort with fine restaurants, casino and cinemas, while Dinan is inland at the head of the Rance estuary.

Dinard used to be a famous watering hole for the Victorian and Edwardian English aristocracy. Not surprisingly, its hotels and restaurants have a period charm - and a villa civilization is set into myriad mini-botanical gardens throughout the town. Nice walks include the Ecluse Beach and the Clair de Lune Promenade - and boat trips are available to Cezembre Island, to Cap Frehel and a trip up the Rance Estuary, tides permitting, to Dinan.

Dinan is a town of 14th century houses and shops, with fortifications and cobbled streets which are a delight to wander through. Inter-France Reservations takes bookings for two hotels in the town, the 36-room Alleux on the Route de Ploubalay, and the 31-room Remparts on the Rue de Chateau. As both hotels are contracted it is possible for the operator to negotiate some fine bargains for coach parties.

In addition, IFR have two substantial contracted hotels in Dinard - the 77-room Printania and the 59-room Emeraude Plage. IFR also have a contracted hotel in

St Malo with 57 rooms, the Inter Hotel on the Blvd des Talards.

It is perhaps hard to believe, but St Malo was totally rebuilt following the devastation of World War II - with the ramparts and the narrow streets of the Ville Close reconstructed in the original style of the 17th and 18th centuries. The town has all the facilities for tourists and visitors one would expect of such a busy ferry port.

So that concludes my four part series on Brittany and what it has to offer the British coach operator. As we have now travelled almost full circle I'll repeat my assertion that there is an area which is too good to leave to continental operators and specialist schools trips.

Brittany has sand, sea and sun in attractive settings - backed up with fairytale castles and a rich heritage of attractions and architecture further inland. And I re-stress - given its similarities and cultural Celtic connections with Cornwall, why are we not selling the area to our present Cornwall client base?

USEFUL CONTACTS

**Comite Regional du
Tourisme de Bretagne,
3 rue d'Espagne,
BP 4175,
35041 Rennes Cedex,
Bretagne,
France.**

Tel: 99-50-11-15.

**Brittany Ferries,
The Brittany Centre,
Wharf Road,
Portsmouth PO2 8RU.**

Tel: 0705-753033.

**Inter-France Reservations,
3 Station Parade,
London NW2 4NU.**

Tel: 01-450 9388/9391.



Jackson of Chorley was running a school vacation at the time of my visit (pictured here in Dinan) - but Brittany's appeal should extend beyond the school holiday.

Height of ferry luxury

THE EEC's biggest and most luxurious ferry-liner, the Olau Hollandia, has entered service on the Sheerness-Vlissingen route.

The 33,336-tonne Ro-Ro can carry 1,600 passengers and up to 118 PSV/HGVs. It has 423 cabins, all with private shower and toilet, to accommodate every passenger.

A supermarket, discos, shops, restaurants, casino and cafeteria are just a few of the facilities on offer to passengers. There has been special attention paid to the needs of the handicapped with specialised cabins, toilets, lift and level flooring at the entrance to all facilities.

The Dutch port of Vlissingen is ideally-situated for tours of Holland and Belgium, with just a short journey to the West German border. However, the vessel itself may prove an attraction.

The ferry line is certainly pushing the on-board conference facilities and obviously anticipating business meetings to be held on board. This may bring some feeder work for operators.

Typical prices in high season are £30 return per passenger over a five day period, with berths from £8.50 to £14. Coaches, of course, travel free, while drivers get free berth and £5 meal voucher.

Sailings are at 11am from Sheerness, arriving Vlissingen at 7pm, and from Vlissingen at 10.30pm, arriving in Sheerness at 7am. Bookings and information on 0795 666666.

Stars head for Butlins

BUTLIN'S Minehead is offering stars such as Johnny Cash, Tony Bennett, Des O'Connor, Lulu, Max Boyce and Cannon and Ball in its winter programme, and five per cent discounts for parties of 20 plus.

Organisers travel free in the deal and can enjoy the half-board accommodation, entertainment, local attractions and Butlins tropical pool Sunsplash, heated to a sizzling 84 degrees.

The breaks are extremely popular with the 40-60 age group and offer some special facilities for the handicapped. Coach parking is good and there is some potential for day trips during the break.

Full details of the breaks - which start at around £35 per head - are from Tom King, of West Somerset Tourism on 0984 32291, or direct from the Somerwest World complex on 0800 222555.



Ferries brochure

GROUP rates for British Channel Island Ferries are explained in full in the Group Travel Planner launched in advance of its main 1990 brochure. Coaches are not, of course, allowed on to the islands, but the rates, which start at £29 return, might give operators some transit work. Contact BCIF on 0705 667799 for the brochure and planner.

Scots guide

SCOTLAND is anxious to promote its conference facilities, and has launched an 80-page guide to do so.

Useful for operators whose clients include companies, the guide gives some detail of available venues, facilities and attractions. Copies are available from the Scottish Tourist Board, 23 Ravelston Terrace, Edinburgh EH4 3EU.

Real reindeer at Marwell

MARWELL Zoological Park is heavily promoting a Christmas event which uses its own, real reindeer as props, Prancer and Dancer are just part of the Winter Wonderland deal, which includes the time-honoured festive grotto, mince pie and log fire. Booking forms are from the office, by phoning 0962 74407.

Ghostly prize on offer



BISHOP Auckland's Redworth Hall Hotel is offering a £5,000 bounty for any guest substantiating the existence of ghosts in its corridors...and hopes this will draw incoming tourists.

Admitting that the incentive is born of desperation, the hotel can however boast some history of haunting and the look of the Elizabethan building will draw attention from American and Japanese visitors who are equally 'desperate' to soak up the culture of Western Europe.

Clients should be warned that they will have to re-visit the hotel to claim their prize, since it is made up of meals and accommodation taken there. Full details from Malcolm Powell, on 091 268 4000, or Redworth Hall Hotel on 0388 772442.

ETB awards announced

THE English Tourist Board's 'England for Excellence' awards saw an American entrepreneur and an English lord share top honours, while a coach operator took the Tourist Transportation award.

Last week's ceremony saw Stapleford Park's Bob Payton - the American - scoop the Tourism Personality of the Year while Lord Montagu of Beaulieu got the Long-Term Contribution to Tourism Award for his stately home.

The Transport Award went to Flights Travel Group of Birmingham, who operate airport connections and charter coaches, for their customer care and comprehensive service.

Other award winners were: Best Western Hotels (Marketing Award for Serviced Accommodation); Country Holidays (Marketing Award for Self-Catering Accommodation); Imperial War Museum (Visitor Attraction); Travelodge (Development/Self-Catering); Calke Abbey (Development Attraction); Somerset Visitor Centre (Tourist Information Centre); Plymouth (Best City); Bournemouth (Best Resort); Lancaster (Best Tourist Destination); and Warner Holidays (English Holiday and Travel Company of the Year).

Plaxton sponsor visit

PLAXTON Coach and Bus helped sponsor a UK visit by 46 Dutch operators when they supplied a Paramount 3500 built on DAF SB3000 chassis for them.

The whistle-stop tour included visits to Cambridge, Chester, Lincoln and York before settling at Scarborough. The party left the country by ferry at Hull after getting new ideas for tour venues.

Show dates

ONE of the premier tourist attractions of the year, the London Boat Show, opens on January 4, through until January 14.

Party rates are £3.80 for adults, £1.50 children (unless accompanied by parents, in which case they enter free). The show boasts an additional 50 boats in Chelsea Harbour, with a connecting bus service. For full details phone National Boat Shows Ltd, on 0932 854511.

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1990

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5 nights full board £48.75 standard room, full board including VAT.
(Minimum 40 people)

INTERESTED?

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'Coaches Welcome'

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Applications from people who would like to take up this challenge should be made in writing to G F Pygall Esq. Chairman, People's Provincial Buses, Gosport Road, Fareham, PO16 0ST enclosing a full cv to reach him by no later than Friday, December 8 1989.

(33216/SV/64)

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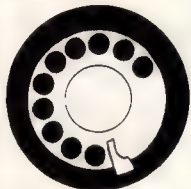
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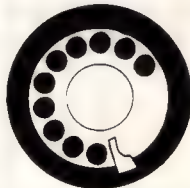
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12 metre, 57 seats, power door, in service up to MoT expiry.

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33218

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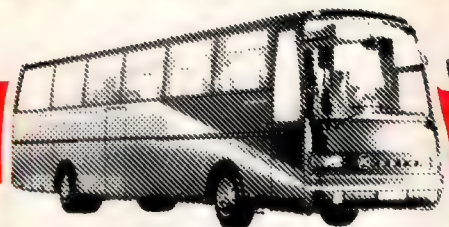
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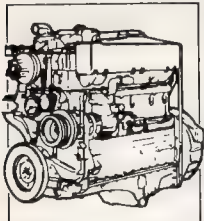
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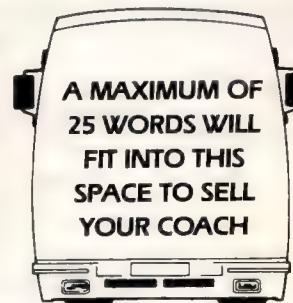
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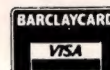
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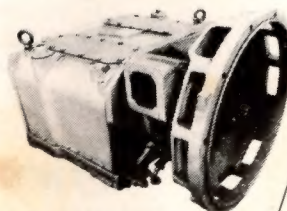


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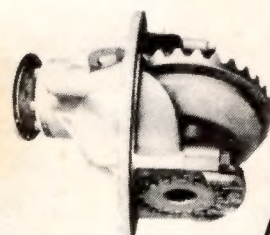
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